THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE RIGVEDA

C. Kunhan Raja

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THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE RIGVEDA

by

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PREFACE

The whole of the *Rigveda* was published in six volumes by Max Muller along with the commentary of Sayana in the middle of the last century. In the fifth and the sixth volumes many indices were also added. The text and the commentary were re-edited at the close of the century. From Bombay there appeared another edition of the *Rigveda* with the commentary of Sayana about this time. There is a new edition of the whole work from Poona, published by the Tilak Vaidika Samshodhan Mandal. This contains the indices also. The text in the *Samhita* (with euphonic combination) and the *Pada* (where the words are detached from one another) was also published by Max Muller. The text in *Samhita* and *Pada* are also available in some Indian editions. The text was edited in Roman characters by Aufrecht.

Wilson had translated the text, mainly following Sayana's commentary, and Griffith translated the text in verse. There are the two German translations by Ludwig in prose and by Grassmann in verse. The former is in five volumes, with two volumes containing the text and three volumes the notes. There is also an index volume. He has arranged the text according to the subject-matter thus departing from the traditional arrangement of the *Rigveda*. Grassmann groups the text into two portions, one portion containing the seven Books from II to VIII and the other containing the first, ninth and tenth Books. He gives the translations of many songs and of verses in many songs only in an Appendix, without accepting them in the main text. There are the complete notes by Oldenberg.

Goldner translated the entire text in German, and it was ready about forty years ago when the first volume appeared. That was the time when I was studying under him. The entire translation was published recently in the Harward Oriental Series in four volumes, the last volume containing indices. There is a *Vedic Concordance* and also the *Rigveda Repetitions* by Bloomfield.

In all the translations and notes, there is a bias for linguistics. The literary aspect is practically ignored in all of them. As for culture, the general view is that the *Rig-veda* represents a primitive one. Although there is the linguistic side in the study of Homer, there is also the cultural side, and Homer is studied as one of the best literary specimens. I have always held the view that the Vedas must be studied for understanding the beginnings of our civilization and also for understanding one among the great civilizations of the world. Greece did not mark the farthest boundary of the area of the centres of civilization in ancient times, and Greek civilization did not mark the boundary of the beginning of the civilization of man. There were civilizations among men in regions further away than Greece and in periods earlier than the Greek civilization. But at present modern civilization is traced back only to Greek civilization. There we find the beginnings of art and literature, of history, of politics, of science and of philosophy. My conviction is that ancient Indian civilization is as close to modern civilization as Greek civilization, perhaps closer than the latter. There has been a continuity of civilized life in India from Vedic times, and although there has been much change, the genius of the nation, the spirit of the nation, remains unimpaired. Modern Indian civilization can be correctly understood only if we trace it back to Vedic times, and examine how other civilizations came into contact with it and how it absorbed and assimilated such civilizations and how it grew through such contacts.

A translation or interpretation of the Vedas should not merely explain the linguistic peculiarities of the texts; it should also present the culture contained in them. It must be a literary rendering and a literary interpretation. It is with such a view that I wrote a book on the Vedas which was published by the Andhra University. Then I also started to prepare a translation, of which a good portion was got ready in a provisional form. In the book already published I have dealt with the texts, the poets, the religion and philosophy, Nature, stories, heaven, and the land and the people. At the time when I was translating the text I fell ill. My condition became so precarious that I

had to resign my position in the University and to take rest at Bangalore. When I recovered, I thought of taking up the work again. At this stage, Messrs. D. B. Taraporevala Sons & Co. Private Ltd. suggested to me that I should prepare a "Quintessence of the Rigveda" and this book is the result. I have included in this book selections from the *Rigveda* that present such points which I consider to be the salient features of the culture of the *Rigveda*. The *Rigveda* must be lifted out of sectarian religion and presented as a national literature with a universal appeal. I have not seen in the *Rigveda* any evidence of a desire to escape to a heaven or to end the sequence of life and death. I have found no indication of an advocacy of a renunciation of the world, to live in the spirit free from material entanglements. I have not found any sign of a Supreme Personal God. On the contrary I have found many things that are in conflict with such factors in man's life. I can call the *Rigveda* our spiritual heritage only if by that term we mean the heritage of a doctrine that in this universe there is a factor called the spirit or life as a fundamental and that it is not a materialistic evolution with life as a mere accident. If by the term it is meant that there is a conflict between matter and spirit and that we must discard the material side of the universe and accept only the spiritual, I have not been able to find such a philosophy in the *Rigveda*. In the *Upanishads*, which interpret the philosophy of the *Rigveda*, there is no indication of that wisdom being a forest wisdom. The Sages of the *Upanishads* were ordinary citizens living in their homes and in cities and in villages, visiting the royal courts and discussing matters of philosophical importance in the assemblies of learned people who used to gather there. Thus both in the *Rigveda* and in the *Upanishads* we have only a human philosophy and not a forest philosophy. There is no "renunciation" either, advocated in the *Upanishads*. We find only an attempt to explain the process of the evolution of the phenomenal world from the Absolute.

It may be that many people may complain that the views presented here wound their religious susceptibilities. Many facts, like eating animal food and the drinking of alcohol, have already been presented by earlier writers and

they are all accepted by scholars in general. One must try to replace susceptibilities with convictions, and then there will remain nothing to wound. It is better to face facts than to hide facts and feel happy that one's susceptibilities are safe. I have noted in this book the element of love between man and woman outside wedlock as a general feature in the social life of the people in Vedic times. Sanskrit literature is noted for the element of *Shringara*. There is no *Shringara* unless there are three factors in it, namely, jealousy among co-wives, which means polygamy, love outside wedlock and alcoholic drinks. If we remove these three factors from Sanskrit literature, then there will remain nothing in it which we can call an art with *Shringara* as the centre. I know that all these three factors are now condemned as evils. The introduction of renunciation (*Samnyasa*) is a bar to *Shringara* and there is no work in Sanskrit literature with *Shringara* as the main interest where there is the advocacy of renunciation. All the characters who have joined the monastic order after renouncing their interest in the world have been found, as represented in Sanskrit *Shringara* literature, to help Man in his worldly life, to enjoy life within the sphere of love. The attempt in the present book is to exhibit a certain feature in the *Rigveda* as reflecting the culture of the people at that time. One will notice a close affinity between the poetry of the *Rigveda* and the poetry of later times like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* and the works of Kalidasa. There has been an unbroken continuity in the literary developments from the earliest times, from *Rigvedic* times, in Sanskrit literature, and there is a unity between the poetry of the *Rigveda* and the poetry of the Classical period. Both have a human interest of a universal nature.

—C. Kunhan Raja

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I. Introductory

The Vedas represent the earliest literary specimens in the Sanskrit Language. They are also the earliest literary record of the Aryan peoples. The remnants of the civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia and Asia Minor are considered by scholars as much earlier than the Vedic civilization. But there is a view that the Vedas are as ancient as, if not more so than, such civilizations on the west of India. If this view is accepted then the Vedas form the earliest literary record of humanity.

The entire Vedic literature is divided into four classes as the *Rigveda* or the Book of Adorations, the *Yajurveda* or the Book of Rituals, the *Samveda* or the Book of Songs, and the *Atharvaveda* or the Book of Wisdom. The Vedas, thus classified into four groups, have developed along three stages. There are the original texts in each of the four classes and there are the commentaries on them, one set of commentaries relating to the rituals and the other to the philosophy. The former is called the *Brahmanas* and the latter is known as the *Upanishads*. Then there are exegetical works relating to Etymology (*Nirukta*), Grammar (*Vyakarana*), Prosody (*Chandas*), Phonetics (*Shiksha*), Astronomy (*Jyotisha*) and Rituals (*Kalpa*). They are called the Six Limbs of the Vedas (*Vedangas*).

The Vedic literature in the four classes and in the first three strata came to an end by the time of the Buddha, about 600 B.C. Max Muller assigned a period of two hundred years to each of the three stages and then he added another span of two hundred years as the period for the origin and early development of the texts. Thus he regarded 1400 B.C. as the beginning of Vedic literature. In this calculation the last stage, namely, that of the exegetic texts, is not taken note of since they came after the Buddha. The civilizations on the western side of India date back to the fifth and the fourth millenniums B.C., and there is a view that the Vedas might have been contemporaneous

with them. Thus the date may be pushed back to 3000 or even 4000 B.C. for the beginning of the Vedas.

The date suggested by Max Muller has the linguistic support of the *Avesta*, the date of which is assigned to about 1000 B.C. The language of the *Avesta* is so very closely related to the language of the Vedas that the separation of the people into two nations that developed the two literatures, cannot be much earlier than the date of the *Avesta*. So the Indian people who had developed the Vedas could not have separated from the main stock earlier than about 2000 B.C. They then migrated into India from Iran after this separation and developed Vedic literature, which could thus reasonably have begun about 1400 B.C.

Hermann Jacobi of Germany and Bal Gangadhar Tilak of India took up a new line. They noted the astronomical data in the Vedas. It is found that there is evidence of the recollection of the Vernal Equinox falling at the time when the Sun was in Orion. That must have been about 5000 years prior to the time when the present Indian calendar was fixed with the Vernal Equinox falling at the time when the Sun was in Aries, and this was in the beginning of the Christian Era. So, the Vedas must be assigned to about 5000 B.C. Later, Tilak noted that there are recollections traceable in the Vedas to a period when the Vernal Equinox fell at the time of the position of the Sun in the Thishya Star, the eighth constellation. Thus, he concluded that the Vedas may be pushed back even to about 10,000 B.C. This is not generally accepted by scholars. They do not believe that the calculations of the positions of the Sun could have been accurate enough in those primitive times to form a basis for fixing dates.

About A.D. 1920, some remnants of an early civilization were discovered in the Indus Valley and this civilization is now accepted as pre-Vedic. That must have come to its end about 2000 B.C. and the Aryans could not have come to India earlier than this date. About ten years earlier the remnants of the Hittite civilization were discovered in Asia Minor, and in a treaty between a Hittite king and a Mitanni king, there is mention of some of the Vedic gods. This treaty bears the date of the second half of the second millennium before Christ. If the Vedas were known in

Asia Minor at that time, some scholars have suggested that the Vedas must be pushed back a little more. But all scholars do not accept this mention of the Vedic gods as a reference to the Vedas, but only to the pre-Vedic period of Indo-Iranian history when the two peoples had the same residence in Iran. Thus the date of about 1400 B.C. is generally accepted for the Vedas by scholars.

We have to consider the question whether the astronomical calculations noticed in the Vedas could be so far removed from the actual positions as to be unfit for fixing dates. What could be the error? Can it be more than half a constellation distance? That will then be only a difference of about half a millennium, and the difference between the date calculated on astronomical basis and the date calculated on linguistic basis is about three to four millenniums. The matter demands to be examined. The final date has not been fixed yet. Indian tradition has an era called the Kali Era that started in 3101 B.C. That was the time when there had been a degradation of virtue in the life of Man and when the Great God came down to earth as Shri Krishna to exterminate the enemies of civilization. If this tradition has any historical value, then the Vedas must be pushed back to about the time suggested by Tilak.

At the time when Westen scholars came into contact with Sanskrit and when they began to calculate the date of the Vedas, there was their belief in the theory of Creation as given in the Genesis of the Bible and in the geological calculations on the age of the earth and of human civilization. Both of these had some influence in keeping the date of the Vedas at as late a period as possible. That was also considered to be the time when Man was young in the world. Thus Vedic poetry could be considered to be only the poetry of a primitive people. They came from a foreign land and moved about him from region to region in search of water and pasture. They worshipped the powers that are supposed to abide behind the visible facts of Nature, to obtain favours and to avert dangers from them.

But in India itself, the Vedas were considered to be the repository of all wisdom. All arts and sciences and every aspect of Man's knowledge was traced to the Vedas.

This did not have reference to the text of the Vedas. The Vedas were a set of texts and the Vedas were also the aggregate of human wisdom, not committed to any text form. No one has seriously propounded a doctrine that the available text of the Vedas comprehend the entire wisdom and that there is nothing in the text that does not literally express the truth. The position taken up in Indian tradition is that the Vedas in the abstract contain the entire wisdom and that if any fact is not found in the available text, such a fact should be considered as contained in the Veda that is now lost (*Nashta Veda*). Further, only a portion of the text of the Veda expresses the truth and the remaining parts are subsidiary to such parts and derive authority as expressions of truth only in a secondary and indirect way. Yet there has always been some popular belief that the text contains the entire wisdom and that the entire text expresses the truth in a literal way.

The *Yajurveda* and the *Samaveda* are related to the rituals in their entirety. The *Atharvaveda* has no relation with the rituals, and in the case of the *Rigveda* only certain parts are employed in the rituals. Even here many passages have been employed in the rituals in an artificial way and not in consideration of the natural content of the text. Poets used to compose new adorations addressed to the gods on the occasion of the rituals and the old texts were ignored and pushed out of currency; many of them were lost and some of them were imitated by later poets. Most of them were composed for recitation on the occasion of the rituals and not as any integral part of the ritual. They were composed as poetry and not as sacred formulae for employment in the rituals as in the case of the *Yajurveda*.

The entire Vedic literature was taken up at a later stage as a unit for employment at the rituals. They ceased to have any other value. The meaning of the texts was studied only as a necessary preliminary for employing them at the rituals. Their literary value was completely ignored. Even in the time of Yaska's *Nirukta*, the Vedic texts were regarded only as elements in the rituals. If they have no other importance than to be recited at the rituals, what has their meaning to do with the latter? As factors in the

rituals, the Vedas have no meaning; they are only a series of sounds, like musical sounds. This was the position taken up by some persons. Later it became a cardinal doctrine that the Vedas have no other value than as recitations at the rituals, and that the texts have to be employed at the rituals only by those who know the meaning also. Thus one of the medieval commentators, named Skandaswamin, who belonged to the beginning of the seventh century A.D., definitely says at the beginning of his commentary that he was writing the commentary only in so far as the texts have to be employed at the rituals by those who know the meaning. Sayana, about eight centuries later, also says that he undertook the commentary of the *Yajurveda* before he took up the *Rigveda* in so far as the *Yajurveda* is more important at the rituals than the *Rigveda*. In the whole range of Sanskrit literature there is no hint that the *Rigveda* has a literary value. No one suggests that it is good poetry.

They drew a distinction between the Vedas which are superhuman (*Apaurusheya*) and the poetry of later days like that of Kalidasa, which is the product of a poet. The Vedas express the things as they are, and the poetry of the later days represents the things as they were known to the poets. They did not recognize that the works of Kalidasa and other poets also represent the things as they are, as reflected on the imagination of the poets, and not as they were understood by the poets. The distinction really holds good only between true poetry and empirical sciences. But according to the latter-day theories, the Vedas represent the true state of things, as some sort of revealed literature, and not as true poetry. Such a revelation was possible only in the case of a few gifted persons, who will not reappear in the world.

The rituals were performed only by a few persons, and so the study of the Vedas was confined also to a few persons. They claimed a monopoly of its study and of its employment at the rituals. Others disowned the Vedas. Thus what was originally a national literature became the property of a community. When other religions also became prominent in the national life of the country, this Vedic literature became the property of a community with-

in a certain religious persuasion and the Vedas became the basis for a particular religion. It lost its national and universal appeal. As a matter of fact, when it ceased to be literature, it also lost all its emotional appeal. Thus at present some people claim monopoly of the Vedas and others disown the Vedas as of no value to them. I cannot deny the fact that the *Yajurveda*, in spite of its literary and historical importance, is essentially a ritualistic literature relating to a particular religious persuasion. But that is not the case with the *Rigveda*. May be, portions of the *Rigveda* are employed at the rituals. But it is essentially good poetry and that is its real importance. What was once a national literature with a universal appeal has again to be lifted to that old position of eminence and human values. It is only a very small part of the *Rigveda* that has any true relation with the rituals. There are many portions that can have no sort of relation with any ritual at all. According to tradition also, such portions have a value in rituals only by being employed for the recitation of a holy text (*Japa*).

The *Rigveda* has both a ritualistic and some religious background. But the religion in the background is not what can be called a religion. In a religion there is some particular person who has a revelation of the truth in the universe and that particular person establishes a Church with a hierarchy of priests and also some sort of Religious Order to which admission is restricted to those who are prepared to accept certain disciplines in private life and also some beliefs in certain dogmas. There is no such religion behind the *Rigveda*. The only factor that is of a religious nature consists of the rituals. In most of the religions, the person who had the revelation had that revelation imparted by a God, and there may be religions where he received that revelation through personal effort without a God. Even within the scheme of the rituals of the Vedas, there is no such Original Teacher of the religion and there are no dogmas for belief. There are no Religious Orders and there is no Church and there are no priests. The citizens functioned at the rituals as citizens and not as members of a Clerical Order. They lived as citizens with no special disciplines to be observed by them.

There is no Personal Supreme God in the religion of the Vedas. There are many gods and there are many persons on whom there had dawned the wisdom about the nature of the truth. They all functioned together in conducting the ritual. Otherwise they were all members of the civilian population with their homes and their families. It is at a very late stage in the current of Vedic culture that there arose a Personal Supreme God with Teachers carrying the message of the God to the world. In this way, one Supreme God was set against another Supreme God and one Teacher was set against another Teacher. But this is not a survival of the Vedic order of things; it is a complete deviation from the Vedic Path.

When there are many persons who have had some sort of illumination regarding the truth of the universe, there is sure to be some sort of philosophy also. We find such a philosophy too in the background of the Vedas. The Vedas are not texts on philosophy, and what may be called Vedic philosophy is not the philosophy in the Vedic texts; it is the philosophy behind the Vedic texts. Such a philosophy that was behind the original Vedas became crystallised in the interpretation of the original texts called the *Upanishads*. There is an Absolute and there is this phenomenal world that has evolved from that Absolute. There are certain stages in the course of this evolution of the phenomenal world from the Absolute and such stages are what are called the three worlds in the text of the *Rigveda*. They represent a gradation in fineness and not a gradation in space, what is above and what is below. There are certain powers, some active agents, generated during the course of this evolution, and they are the gods (*Devas*), situated within the different gradations in this evolution. Only some persons can be in communion with such powers. They have poetry about such powers describing them in their own form, with a body, with limbs, with emotions, with all the features of human beings. They eat, they wear robes, they put on weapons, they fight in the cause of the Order of Evolution (*Rita*). They function in such a way that people could have plenty and be happy in their life on this earth. In every religion, there is a dogma of a condition beyond this world and beyond this

life where alone there is true happiness. But there is no such escape into another world and another condition beyond, from the sufferings of this world. There is nothing in this world which is absolutely beyond the grasp of human intellect. It may be that all persons cannot grasp that subtle truth. But there is no subtle truth which is denied to Man. Others may have to infer such truths, without directly understanding them or they may have to know about such things on the authority of others who can have a direct experience of them. Ultimately everything is known through direct experience. There is nothing in the world that can be known only through inference or on the authority of another. If a thing cannot be known through direct experience by some human being, such a thing has no existence.

There are two fundamental doctrines in the Vedic scheme. One is that the life of Man on earth is sufficient for realizing the highest goal of Man. There may be some expansion beyond the sphere experienced by the people in general. But that is not a beyond; it is only an extension of this. "This" and "that" together form a single whole. There is no migration from "this" into "that"; there is only an extension of "this" into "that". The other doctrine is that human intellect can grasp everything that is real. Everything that is real comes within the scope of the direct experience of Man. Everything may not be within the scope of the direct experience of Man. Everything may not be within the sphere of the knowledge of every one. But one is capable of knowing everything by his nature, though not by his actual accomplishment. The truth may be what is hidden; but it is taught to Man because of Man's ability to experience directly. There is no gift of a faculty by a God to Man. Man has that faculty.

At a later stage some new doctrines found their way into the thought patterns of India. Some sort of an iron curtain was erected between this life on earth and the ultimate goal of Man. The goal is either happiness in heaven or supreme bliss of final release from the limitations and bondages and sufferings in this world, what is called *Moksha*. This world and the heaven, this life and the state of final release, are in two separate compartments.

The rituals take Man from this world to heaven and knowledge takes him from this life to the state of final release. Thus the purpose of both the rituals and of knowledge became quite a new one. Man as Man cannot know certain things. If he knows those things, then he ceases to be a man. He becomes disembodied. Limitation becomes an integral part of Man's being. Certain categories found their way into the scheme of philosophical thought that are by their very nature beyond the purview of direct experience; such things can only be inferred. There are other categories which can be known by Man only on the authority of others. Thus inference and authority became primary modes of knowing instead of confirmatory modes for such things that can be known by direct experience. If what is known by direct experience is later inferred or known through the testimony of another person, such inference and such authority are only confirmatory of what is known earlier by direct experience. Thus fire is seen in the kitchen in association with smoke, and when smoke is seen on the hill, the knowledge of the fire only confirms what was known earlier by direct experience in the kitchen. Similarly when fruits are seen on the riverside and when some one knows the existence of the fruits on the riverside on the authority of the person who had seen them, this authority too has only a confirmatory value. Neither inference nor authority is a primary mode in these cases.

A soul that survives the destruction of the body at the time of death, its passage into heaven or hell or back into the world again in a new body with new environments and new experiences, the existence of that soul in a state without any experience of an object, free from sufferings, the methods of reaching that heaven or of a better condition in the next life, and such other matters do not come within the experience of the ordinary man. They are either inferred or they are accepted on the authority of specially gifted persons who will not reappear in the world. In this situation, inference and authority become primary modes of knowing, independent of direct experience. Those who are already in heaven cannot communicate with their brethren left behind on earth. Those who have gone beyond experience and suffering cannot also communicate their

condition to those who are within the limitations of life.

The Charvaka system did not subscribe to this new situation. It regarded Man as supreme in his ability to know everything. It also regarded life as sufficient for the fullest realization of the highest goal of Man. The followers of this system retained the Vedic ideals. And they were later condemned for not accepting *Dharma*, the performance of rituals to reach a heaven, and for not accepting the authority of texts prescribing such rituals which did not exist in the Vedas. In the Vedas the rituals were performed for happiness in life and not in after-life. The Charvakas also did not accept the authority of others who taught the doctrine of a final escape from the limitations of life on earth.

The Vedic position was further distorted to the extent that the Vedas contained the teachings of God. The Vedas really contained the knowledge of the truth as revealed to Man in his illumination from within. The Mimamsa system did not accept the origin of the Vedas in God. But in practically all systems of Indian thought the Vedas are believed to have been revealed to the primal Teachers among men by God and these teachers continued the tradition of the knowledge of the Vedas among men in the world. Thus the doctrine of a heaven and the doctrine of a final release have required the acceptance of the authority of a Supreme Personal God. This is a new factor. The Charvakas could not accept such a God too.

Scholars could not understand the scheme of religion and philosophy in the Vedas. How can there be a religion without a Personal God? How can there be rituals unless such rituals took the performer to the region of that God? How can there be a philosophy or a science in which there is no distinction between matter and spirit? Matter must be dead, without life, if it is to be matter. Life must be extraneous to matter if it is to be life. All the religions and schemes of philosophical thought accorded with such a pattern. So, scholars tried to reconcile the religion and the philosophy of the Vedas with the generally accepted patterns.

The Vedic religion was taken to be a progression from the worship of the powers of Nature to the worship of a

Supreme God. There is the intermediate stage in which each of the powers behind the phenomenon of Nature was in turn thought of as the Supreme God. Thus there is a Supreme God and only one Supreme God. This is not Monotheism as it is understood; in Monotheism the Supreme God is permanent and his qualities do not shift from this divinity to that. Here there is such a shift. So Max Muller coined a new term for this sort of Monotheism. For the Latin word "Mono", he substituted the Greek word "Heno" and coined the term Henotheism to designate this Vedic pattern of Monotheism. And this pattern, according to him, represents a passage from the Many Gods to the One God. To the scholars a Supreme One God is an intellectual necessity. The rituals led Man from this world to the higher world of spiritual light. There is a distinction between matter and spirit, and Man tried to ignore the matter below and to reach the pure spirit above. This is the general interpretation.

The difficulty is that in India we never had a Monotheism till very recent times. If one reads the *Mahabharata*, it will be found that every divinity is in his turn a Supreme Godhead. This is exactly what is found in the Vedas too. There was never a time when there were many gods representing the different phenomena of Nature and there never came a stage when there was only One God. Each such god represents the Supreme and each has his own individuality too. But a stage came later when there arose a plurality of Supreme Gods. Some asserted that Vishnu was the Supreme God and others appointed Shiva as the Supreme God. There was feud among the people on this account. In each persuasion there arose sects differing from one another on details of ritualism and dogmas and this too gave rise to conflicts. But this is not a progression of the Vedic religion; it is an abandonment of and a departure from it.

In the Veda there is no distinction between matter and spirit. There is only the world which is a unity. It is matter with life or life in matter. The relation is something like the relation between sugar and its sweetness. We cannot discard the material aspect in sugar and enjoy the sweetness side of it. There is an Absolute and there is

also the Phenomenal World. The Absolute is infinite while the Phenomenal World is limited. Throughout the *Rigveda* we find this distinction between the Absolute and the Phenomenal. The terms used are *Sthatus* (stationary) and *Charatham* (moving), *Jagatas* (moving), *Tasthushah*, (stationary) *Amritam* (immortal) and *Martyam* (mortal). There are also the terms *Para* and *Parama* (Supreme) and *Uttama* (highest).

The Absolute is spoken of as essentially matter with the potentiality of life as an inherent factor in it (X-129) and also essentially life with the potentiality of matter in it (X-90). In the first of these two poems, it is said that a Will arose in that Absolute Matter and that it had the life-breath without inhaling and exhaling air. In the second it is said that out of that Life Absolute there arose the differentiated world (*Virat*). Nowhere is it said in the Vedas that one can be separated from the other. There is the life aspect which continues when at the time of death, the gross material aspect falls out. But that life is a finer aspect of matter and is not outside matter. What is not found in the Vedas and what is not accepted by the Charvakas is that there is something called a soul which at the time of death migrates from the dead body to a new body, like a monkey hopping from one tree to another, or that the soul migrates to a higher region called the heaven, just like a monkey climbing from the earth to the tree-tops. At the time of death and after death there is a continuity in life function and that continuity is again in matter. Life is never dissociated from matter and there is no matter which is absolutely devoid of life. The life function moves from gross matter to another set of gross matter and the fine aspect of matter keeps up the continuity. This fine matter is what is known as *Linga Sharira* or Subtle Body in the later systems of philosophy.

When God and Heaven and a Final Release from the world are all taken out of the religion and the philosophy of the Vedas and when matter and life become inseparable factors in the constitution of the world, evolved from an Absolute, there remains only a real world in which Man functions without a beginning and without an end. Man and his life and enjoyments in the world become the chief

subjects of the *Rigveda* and that is what we find in it. Man does not migrate into another world, the region of the gods. The gods come to the region of Man and Man is in constant communion with the gods. There is mutual co-ordination between Man and the gods and it is said in the *Rigveda* that gods helped in the prosperity of Man and Man aided in the prosperity of the gods (X-14-3).

There was family life and there was social life. There was also civic organisation. The people had their own festivities and amusements and arts and sports and pastimes and avocations. Social life was not confined to wedlock. They ate and drank; they ate animal food and they drank alcohol. They even ate beef. They fought their enemies with success. They never committed aggression on a foreign nation and they never allowed a foreign nation to commit aggression on them. They were united. Political unity of the entire people was not so stiff as to crush the freedom of the individual or even of the smaller political units. And at the same time, unity was sufficiently strong to protect the integrity of the nation against foreign molestation. Differences never deteriorated into conflicts. Differences contributed to the development of individualities. If any one asks me the question, "What do you consider to be the essence of Vedic culture?" my reply is, "A happy life in a beautiful world."

The *Rigveda*, in which we find the reflection of such a culture, consists of songs or poems (*Suktas*), 1017 in number, consisting of 10,472 verses, grouped into ten Books. They are all by a number of different poets, and though the main portion of the *Rigveda* is in the form of adorations addressed to the various deities, there is a variety of material as theme for the poetry of the *Rigveda* and each such subject matter has some human interest. The poets loved Nature and they found their own likeness in Nature. They sang about Nature in their own form, with their own emotions and their own feelings. They were in communion with Nature.

The poets whose compositions are included in the *Rigvedic* collection belong mainly to certain Families. Seven of the ten Books are assigned (from II to VIII) to seven such Families. The ninth Book is composed of adorations

to the Soma. In the first Book there are adorations of the gods by poets who belong to Families other than those contained in Books II to VII. In the tenth Book there are songs other than adorations to the gods as the main feature. Even the poets outside the seven Families belong to a few important Families whose founders had been ancient Sages, unlike the Families of the seven Books.

In the poetry of the Vedas, there is a variety of metres employed, which shows that the existing *Rigveda* had a long antecedent in the form of a gradual development and growth of the art of poetry. The Vedic poets employed various devices in manipulating metres and also in handling the language. There are various kinds of figures of speech found in the Rigveda, of which, naturally, similes form the chief ones. The poets knew that the composition of poetry is an art. The language is simple, lucid and elegant, rhythmic and musical. There are lyrics and odes and ballads and songs. There is profundity of thought. The picture painting in words is graphic.

In matter, in form, and in variety, the *Rigvedic* poetry can claim a place among the highest literary art in any language. *Rigvedic* poetry has never been surpassed in Sanskrit and as art, there is no literature in any language that can beat it. It is the earliest poetry of humanity and it continues to be the finest even after the lapse of so many millenniums. It is not the "Scripture" of any religion. There are no dogmas involved in it. It calls for no beliefs. It reflects a very advanced civilization. It is a source book for the study of Man and his life. Its appeal is thus universal.

II. Indra Smites Down The Dragon

There are many gods in the *Rigveda* to whom prayers are addressed for the securing of various benefits. Indra is the most important of them, both in the status that he occupies among the gods and also in the number of songs addressed to him. It is only the Fire God to whom an equally large number of songs are addressed in the *Rigveda*. The songs to Indra and Fire exceed a quarter of the whole text for each. Indra is the hero of a race of martial people. He fights the enemies, defeats and destroys them. He helps the good people. In the description found in the songs, he is the most personal among the gods. We can clearly discern the personality of Indra very vividly in the songs. He has his weapons, as all the gods have. He rides on a chariot drawn by horses, and in many places the horses are spoken of as having manes *(Keshinau)*. It has been suggested that the word may mean "What belongs to the Kessies." He drinks the *Soma* juice and his belly is compared to an ocean when it is filled with *Soma*. He, like all the gods, loves the songs and derives his power to destroy the enemies from them. He holds in his hands a Thunderbolt, the *Vajra*, which has a hundred edges. In his heroic exploits he is helped by the group of gods called the Maruts, the Storm-gods, in one case, and by the singers called the Angirases and by the singer named Brihaspati, in another case. There are two exploits of his that are more prominently mentioned than others, and they are many. One is the killing of Vritra, a demon, who stops the rivers from flowing; by killing him he allowed the waters to flow in the seven rivers. The other is the killing of Vala, another demon, who conceals the cows in a cave behind the mountain; by killing him the cows are released. The latter are spoken of as having been stolen by his friends, the Panis. Among the many places where his first adventure is described there is one song which is very poetical in its imagery and in its graphic description. That is I-32.

"I will now proclaim the heroic exploits of Indra which he had performed in the beginning. He killed the dragon. He urged the waters down. He broke open the channels in the mountains." (1)

Vrita is very often spoken of as a dragon, a serpent. This conception of the enemy of virtuous people is common to other ancient nations also. It is this exploit that later became the story of Shri Krishna trampling down the dragon Kaliya, who defied the waters in the river Kalindi, Jumna, as described in the *Bhagavata Purana* and other works where the story of Shri Krishna is narrated.

"He killed the dragon who had been living in the mountain. The divine architect fashioned for him the *Vajra*, which is easy to handle and to smite with. Like milch-cows that make a bellowing sound, the waters falling down quickly rushed towards the ocean." (2)

"Behaving like a strong bull, he accepted the *Soma* to drink. He drank the *Soma* that had been pressed from the Three Vessels. The powerful hero took up the weapon, the *Vajra*. He killed the first-born among the dragons."(3)

The impetuous nature of the bull is very often mentioned in the *Rigveda*, and the nature of Indra is compared to that. The Vessel is called *Trikadruka* in which there is the element "Three".

"When Indra killed the first-born among the dragons, he was able to destroy the mysterious powers of those who had been wielding such powers. He then produced the Sun, also the celestial region and the Dawn. Thereby, there remained no enemy to him, known." (4)

There is a particular feature in this song which can be understood only in the original. The end of the first verse is the beginning of the second verse, and there is the same relation between the third and the fourth verses. It will be noted that the expression, "He killed the dragon," is common between the first and the second verses and the expression, "He killed the first-born among the dragons." is also common between the third and the fourth verses.

"Indra killed Vritra, the worst sinner, splitting off his shoulder with his *Vajra*, the mighty smiter. He split up his body like the trunk of a tree, with his *Vajra*. The dragon lay touching the earth below." (5)

"He challenged the great hero, one who drinks the *Soma*, who is able to attack others immensely, being filled with a false pride, and he was really one who is not a warrior. He was not able to withstand the continuous rush of Indra's weapons. Being stricken, he, with Indra as his enemy, was crushed." (6)

"With his legs and hands removed from him, he fought with Indra. Then Indra smote the *Vajra* on his sides. He wanted to be a rival to the strong bull. But being smitten, he lay scattered in many places, having been cut into pieces." (7)

"The waters began to flow over him who was lying down like this, taking up their hearts, as if the waters were flowing over the bed of a river that had been dug for them. These very waters which Vritra had been encompassing and stopping with his powers, the dragon had to lie down falling at their very feet." (8)

"She who had Vritra as her son had come down there to protect him. Indra brought down the deadly weapon over her also. In that state, the mother lay above and the son was below; that demoness lay there down like a cow with the calf." (9)

"In the midst of the waters that never stop, that never take a rest in their flow, the body of Vritra lay concealed. The waters flowed freely over the concealed body of Vritra. He who had Indra as a foe, lies there in eternal darkness." (10)

"The women of the Dasa, they who were protected by the dragon, stood there like the cows hidden by the Pani. When the cave of the waters remained covered up, Indra opened it." (11)

There are two terms here, Dasa and Pani. Dasa must be a villager, and the word is related to the modern Persian "*Deh*", a village. They were people across the borders of the Vedic region, and they became the enemies of the Vedic people. The Panis are also enemies of the Vedic people and they lifted their cattle and kept them hidden in caves in the mountains. The story about Panis having stolen the cows and hidden them in a cave belonging to the demon Vala, and the recovery of the cows by Indra

after killing Vala, is very famous in *Rigvedic* lore. It is indicated here.

It is easy to say that Indra is related to the clouds and that the story of Vritra and the release of the waters stopped by him, are only a description of the phenomenon of waters hidden in the clouds and their release by Indra after smiting the clouds with his Thunderbolt. The thunder and the lightning represent the weapon called the *Vajra*. This is what can be said about every Nature poet. It is all a matter of flowers and birds and animals and trees and forests and rivers and lakes and stars and moonlight. But what is interesting in poetry is the human touch in the poems. The poet finds life in them, they find in them their own companions who can sympathise with themselves. Here also we find the same human touch. We see a mother fond of her son and the son making a strong person his enemy. The son challenges the strong enemy but he is not equal to him. The mother tries to protect her son. Both fall in battle. The son had done some harm to innocent persons and now he has to lie down at their feet. The poet has constructed a story out of a phenomenon of Nature.

The Maruts, as helpers of Indra in the fight, are not introduced in this poem. The power which Indra derived from the drink of *Soma* is only hinted at here in the early part. They are all mentioned very often in other parts of the *Rigveda*. There is a humanization of the objects of Nature and there is also a philosophy of life in this poem. The son keeps the waters as prisoners and challenges, in the intoxication of his power, a strong enemy to battle. He is defeated and he lies down at the feet of his former victims. There are similes about the bull and the trunk of the tree and the cow which bellows and which has its calf. The whole description is very vivid.

III. Winning The Light

Indra is the greatest among the gods of the *Rigveda*. This is true from the point of view of the number of songs addressed to him, as found in the *Rigvedic* collection, and also from the point of view of the part played by him in the national life of the people. He is a warrior and an ideal warrior. He represents the heroic genius of the people. A large number of enemies are mentioned in the *Rigveda* as having been killed by him. There are stories about the protection that he has rendered to some individuals. There are two exploits of his that stand out prominently above all the other achievements of this god and that stand out far more prominently than the exploits of any other god in the *Rigveda*. One is his fight against the dragon called Vritra who had been surrounding the waters, preventing the waters from flowing; he killed Vritra and let the waters flow freely. The other is his fight against another demon named Vala who had stolen the cattle and concealed them in the cave behind the mountains; Indra killed Vala and rescued the cows from their captivity.

In his fight against the dragon Vritra, he had the assistance of the gods known as the Maruts. He received his strength to fight that enemy on account of the *Soma* which he drank. The Maruts were also drinkers of the *Soma*. In this way, the *Soma* plays an important part in the fight of Indra against Vritra. He is called the "Lover of *Soma*" (I-104-9). Indra attacked and defeated the god Tvashtar (Architect) when he was born and he drank the *Soma* from the vessels (III-48-4). He must have taken the *Soma* by force! Indra is the same *Soma*-drinker among men and among the gods (VIII-2-4). Indra drank the *Soma* from the Threefold Vessel and through the exhilaration caused thereby he was able to kill the dragon (II-15-1). When Indra drinks the *Soma*, there is no one who can stand up against him in battle (VI-47-1). He drank at the same time three lakes of *Soma* so that he could kill Vritra (V-29-7). "The Maruts whom he associated with himself in drinking

the *Soma*, who as a group increased his powers, along with them, O Indra, drink this *Soma* through Fire as the mouth, with great eagerness." (III-35-9)

In the other exploit of Indra, the Sages called the Angirases and the god named Brihaspati are Indra's close associates. While the Maruts who helped Indra in his fight against Vritra are essentially *Soma*-drinkers, though they are also singers, the Angirases and Brihaspati are essentially singers of adorations, poets, though their connection with the rituals at which *Soma* is offered to the gods, is very intimate. It is poetry sung by the Angirases and by Brihaspati that plays the same part in Indra's fight against Vala which *Soma* played in his fight against Vritra. In the case of Vritra, *Soma* plays the most conspicuous part and in the case of Vala, poetry and song play the most important part. In the case of Vritra, waters are released while in the case of Vala, cows are released from captivity. Cows represent light.

The Angirases are a group of Sages. There is also the chief Angiras whose name is borne by the family of the Angirases. The name means "Messenger". There is the corresponding word in Greek, "*Aggiles*" (pronounced *Angiles*) and this is the English word *Angel*. I cannot say for certain whether the Angirases are an original Indian creation. No other family of Sages in the *Rigveda* can be traced to the other Aryan languages. The Angirases are the messengers between heaven and men on earth. They had all gone to heaven and there they enjoy their life along with the gods and they visit the men on earth at the time of the rituals. Brihaspati belongs to the Angiras family and he is essentially a god who is associated with songs and with wisdom. But he is never a god in the heaven; he is a god on the earth. He is also a poet whose compositions find a place in the *Rigvedic* collection. The Angirases are essentially poets who sing their songs.

"The Angirases who through rituals of worship and through holy gifts, attained immortality and the companionship of Indra, let there be auspiciousness for such Angirases." (X-62-1).

This companionship is the theme for many a piece in the *Rigvedic* poetry.

"You (Indra) opened up the stalls of the cows for the sake of the Angirases." (I-51-3)

"On account of Indra, our ancient forefathers who know the mysterious positions, were able to secure the cows through their songs of adoration." (I-62-2)

"When Indra and the Angirases were making a search for the cows, it was Sarama who actually found the cows." (I-62-3)

"Being adored by the Angirases in their songs, Indra was able to open up the dark gloom and release the light." (I-62-5)

"Indra along with the Angirases as companions, was able to break down Vala." (II-11-20)

"Indra was able to break down Vala, being adored in the songs by the Angirases." (II-15-8)

"Indra broke open the cow-stall, being adored in songs by the Angirases." (IV-16-8)

"With the Angirases as companions, Indra burst open the doors that were firmly fixed, and released the cows from the cave." (VI-17-6)

"'Let there be that old companionship of yours for us.' When the Angirases were singing in this way, Indra killed Vala." (VI-18-5)

"Indra drove out the cows that were confined in the cave revealing them for the sake of the Angirases." (VIII-14-8)

"Securing Indra as companion, the Angirases were able to open the cow-stall." (X-68-7)

There are many places where the song of the Angirases are mentioned and in many places their songs are spoken of as the standard for sweetness, taking them for comparison in similes.

Brihaspati is another divinity who has been associated with Indra, and he is, as his name shows, the "Lord of Songs."

His songs spread on the earth and in heaven (I-191-4). He kills demons, he breaks open the cow-stall (II-23-4). This is connected with Indra's fight against Vala to release the cows that were hidden in the cave. Brihaspati was able to defeat Vala and to drive the cows out; he sent darkness beyond sight and brightened up the heaven (II-24-3).

Brihaspati is spoken of as associated with some singers (VII-10-4; X-14-5). Along with the hosts of the singers who chant sweet songs of adoration, he was able to overcome Vala with his voice (IV-50-5). "Let Brihaspati sing songs of adoration with his *Saman* chants" (X-36-5). Brihaspati won the Dawn, the heaven, the Fire; he was able to remove darkness through his songs (X-68-9). In all such cases we find that he was able to see the light through his songs.

Brihaspati is not specifically mentioned as having been a mortal at any time. But the Angirases are spoken of as having immortality through their companionship with Indra. There is another person, Yama, who too saw the Path and went to the other world. "Yama had found out the Path for us for the first time and along that Path our ancient forefathers had gone" (X-14-2). He had seen the Path for the many (X-14-1). In the *Kathopanishad* it is said that he was the only man who knew the mysteries beyond death. What was to come after death was a dark mystery to Man before he was able to discover the true Path. This must be a sort of illumination regarding the darkness that hides the beyond from our view. We do not know what steps he had taken to secure this illumination. He is in the heaven along with the Angirases (X-14-5). But he is not mentioned along with the Angirases in the search for the cows. The cows are really the light of wisdom.

There is a Sage named Dadhyang who belonged to the Atharvan Family. He received the secret wisdom called the Honey Wisdom from Indra and revealed this to the Twin-gods, the Ashvins, through a horse's head. This is mentioned by the poets when they enumerate the stories connected with he Ashvins.

"Dadhyang, son of Atharvan, propounded to you the Madhu (Honey Wisdom) with a horse's head." (I-116-12)

"You replaced for Dadhyang, the son of Atharvan, a horse's head. He, knowing the Law, propounded to you the Madhu (Honey Wisdom) which related to Ivashtar (Architect) and which was concealed." (I-117-22)

You won the heart of Dadhyang and then you replaced the head of the horse for him." (I-119-9)

Dadhyang had some superhuman powers and Indra was able to kill the ninety-nine Vritras with the bones of Dadhyang (I-84-13). Searching for the horse's head which had been thrown away in the mountains, he found it in the Sharyanavat (I-84-13).

The story is that Indra had imparted the secret wisdom called the Honey Wisdom to Dadhyang and the condition was that he should not reveal it to any one. Should he reveal it, his head would burst into pieces. The Asvins, the Twin-gods, wanted to know this secret wisdom and they approached Dadhyang for it. But there was the condition imposed on the latter. So the Ashvins placed a horse's head on the neck of Dadhyang and through that, Dadhyang revealed the secret to the Ashvins. The horse's head burst and then the Ashvins placed Dadhyang's own head back on his neck. The head of the horse was thrown into a lake called the Sharyanavat. Dadhyang died in due course. The demons attacked Indra knowing that the great sage was dead; so long as he was alive, they were afraid of him and kept quiet. Indra wanted to know if anything of Dadhyang remained, and after a search, the horse's head was found in the lake. With that as a weapon, Indra killed Vritra.

The bull is the symbol of physical power and the horse that of intellectual power. There are the two words "*Daksha*" which means "Physical power" and "*Kratu*" which means "Intellectual power." This distinction and this symbolism have been very clearly kept up in the *Rigveda*. There is a horse called Dadhikravan. He represents wisdom in the *Rigveda*. We do not know the exact relation of the Sage with the horse. But the fact that the wisdom was imparted with a horse's head and that there is a horse which represents wisdom show that there must have been some connection between the two. "*Dadhi*" means "Curdled milk" and "*Anch*" means "Proceeding towards"; "*Kravan*" means "Running towards." I have not been able to see any connection between curdled milk and wisdom in the *Rigveda*. Curdled milk is related to *Soma*, which represents activity and physical power. *Soma* is often mixed with curdled milk for offering to the gods (*Dadhyashira*). I am not satisfied with this etymology. I

feel that the former part of the two names is related to the root "*Dhyai*", which means "to contemplate." The word "*Dhi*" means "song, adoration, thought, etc." in the *Rigveda*. In the *Avesta* there is the word "*Datha*" appearing as "*Datheng*" (*Gatha* 28-10), which means "Wise". My own view is that there is some connection between this word in the *Avesta* and the name of the Sage in the *Rigveda*.

The discovery of some Path had been known to the Vedic poets. They speak of the gods as having known the Path (*Gatuvit*). It is only among the mortals that Yama was the first to know that Path. That must be the Path that leads to the region of light, the heaven described in the *Rigveda* and included in this book (next chapter). In that description it has been said that the king Yama is there. Yama sought out the Path and found it. Angirases and Brihaspati are seekers of that light to which the Path leads. Indra broke open the cave where that light was concealed for the sake of the Angirases.

Dirghatamas was a great Sage who had some sort of illumination and in a song which he recited sitting before the Fire Altar, he explains the mode of that revelation which shone on him. This is in the famous song on wisdom by Dirghatamas (I-164). After dealing with the mystery of Time in symbolic language, he says:

"Who has seen that corporeal being which came into being at first, which the incorporeal had supported? Where is that life, that blood, that soul of the earth? Who has gone to the wise man to ask about this?" (4)

"I with my limited knowledge, ask in my mind, not knowing the truth, about these concealed positions of the gods." (5)

"Not having seen, I ask the poets who have seen, for the sake of knowing, not having known." (6)

"Let him declare here who certainly knows this—the concealed position of the lovable bird." (7)

"They are really women; but they say to me that they are men. One with eyes can see; the blind cannot see. The son who is a poet knows this. He who knows them well becomes the father of the father." (16)

The meaning here is rather uncertain. There is a lot that puzzles in this song. They say something that is ab-

solutely the opposite of the truth. Only those who have eyes can see and others have to trust them. Usually the father teaches the son; but if the son becomes a wise poet, he can take up the role of the father.

"They term them later who are earlier. They term earlier who are later." (19)

Perhaps there is again a reference to the father-son relationship. When the son becomes a wise poet, then he becomes the father able to teach, and as such he becomes earlier also, though really later. When a man becomes wise through the same form of illumination, his whole life changes.

"The life, breathing, rushing fast, remains still at rest. Rushing forward, it remains steady by its own powers, becoming an immortal having the same abode as the mortal." (3)

Here the idea seems to be that when a man becomes wise, there is a double personality in him; he is conscious of the immortal element through his wisdom and yet he is an ordinary mortal. It is the mortal side that moves fast and the immortal side remains at rest. He is himself in a state of wonder about the change in him.

"I do not realise what kind of person I am. I am hidden and yet I move about enwrapped in thoughts." (37)

"Backwards and forwards one wanders about, being taken up by his own powers; he is the immortal having the same abode as the mortal. These two eternally go about, moving around, in different directions. One of them knows the other; the other does not know this one." (38)

This is again a reference to the double personality in a poet who had the illumination. The immortal element knows the mortal element, while the mortal element does not know the immortal element.

The distinction between one who has attained the illumination and one who has not is clearly expressed in an imagery of two birds.

"Two birds, joined together, companions, resort to the same tree. Of them one eats the sweet berry of wisdom on the tree and the other simply gazes on without eating anything." (20)

"There where the birds (the wise ones) ceaselessly sing

forth about their share of immortality (which they enjoy) before the learned assembly, there the lord of all, the protector of the world, the wise, entered me." (21)

The share is the share of wisdom which they enjoy. The father is wisdom itself. It is when the poet was reciting his own song before the learned assembly that true wisdom entered him.

"On that tree where the birds that drink the honey rest in peace and all inspire themselves, on the top of that tree, they say, is verily, the sweet berry. One cannot reach up to it, unless he knows the father." (22)

Only those who had the illumination (father) can know that berry on the top of that tree. In all those cases, the distinction between one who has attained the illumination and another who has not so attained the illumination is drawn closely. There is still another difference.

"Language may be divided into four parts. Of the four parts, only the poets who have imagination can know all of them. Three parts remain concealed in the cave unmoving and only the fourth part is in use among men." (45)

Here the division is not that of the vocabulary. It is the signification of the words that can be divided into four parts. Only a fourth part of the real meanings of words is known to ordinary men. The other three parts are hidden in the cave for them. Brihaspati also draws a similar distinction between those who had the illumination and the other people. This is in his song about wisdom (X-71).

"Just as a woman separates the flour with a winnowing basket from the unbroken parts, the intelligent persons utter their words in the learned assembly and there the companions find out their true companions. Their auspicious lustre is concealed in their words." (2)

The poets are allowed to recite their poems in the learned assembly and when they recite their poems, those who are already recognized as wise discover their companions on such occasions. It is their poetry that decides their position. The merit is concealed in their poetry and the learned people assembled there can separate them, as a woman separates the flour from the unbroken pieces with a winnowing basket.

"Some people may look and yet they do not see. Some people may listen and yet they do not hear. The language reveals its beauty only to some, just as a loving wife wearing charming robes reveals her charms only to her husband." (4)

"All people have eyes to see and ears to hear. They may be companions in this way. But in the matter of the speed of their mind, they are not all equal. Some lakes may have water that comes up to the chest and others to the nose. It is only in some that the water is deep enough for people to bathe freely in clear waters." (7)

The idea seems to be that though water up to the chest or nose is enough to allow one to have a dip, such water gets muddy when one gets into it. It is only the water in a deep lake that remains clear even when a man enters it and that allows him to have a clean bath.

Worship of wisdom is one of the most conspicuous features in the culture of the Veda. Wisdom is not any abstact knowledge of things which have no relation to the facts of Man's life; wisdom is wisdom only when it is related to the life of Man. Wisdom is to understand and to explain and to justify the facts in a man's life. Wisdom relates things beyond with things within the reach of the common people. Wisdom, which comprehends things that are beyond the sphere of the knowledge of the common man, brings such facts into the sphere of the ordinary man's comprehension through poetry. That is why the *Rishis* or Sages are connected with poetry. If such wisdom is presented in a philosopher's prose, ordinary men cannot follow it. Therefore one is recognized as a *Rishi* or Sage only when he is able to know the truth beyond the knowledge of the common man and when he is also able to express such knowledge in terms of poetry, which ordinary people can understand and enjoy. From the beginning to the end of the *Rigveda* one can notice this close relation of wisdom with poetry and the life of the people. There is a difference between the wise man and the ordinary man. But that does not mean that the wise men formed a separate category of humanity, cut off from the normal life of Man. Dirghatamas makes this point clear when he says that in a poet there is a double personality, the immortal person-

ality of the poet and the mortal personality of the common man. When he became a poet he did not cease to be one among the common men. He continued to be that,-along with being associated with the expanded personality of a poet.

In the search for the light which forms one of the most characteristic features of the *Rigveda,* there is something that is very interesting. I have just touched on the point without drawing special attention to it when dealing with the Angirases and Brihaspati. Light is thought of as cows, and since there had been much of cattle-lifting in those days by the enemies of the Vedic people, the concealment of true wisdom through ignorance is compared to the concealment of the cows by the enemy in the caves behind the mountains. One tries to trace the location of such cows in hiding and for that search there must be some method. They must have been making use of search-dogs that can follow up a person or anything else through the sense of smell. In the *Rigveda* it is found that in the case of the search for wisdom concealed behind the barrier ot ignorance, the method used was to employ a dog and that dog is Sarama, the Divine Bitch. They knew the place beyond; and there are two dogs, sons of Sarama, who guard the gates of the abode where the dead people go. They are the dogs of Yama, who is already in that region beyond. In a song relating to the ascent of the dead soul to that region there is something said about those dogs (X-14).

"O Dogs, the sons of Sarama, run fast along the proper path, dogs that have four eyes and that are dark-brown (*Shabala*) in colour. Then you come near to the dead ancestors who are able to know things easily, who enjoy the revels of life along with Yama." (10)

"O Yama, those two dogs of yours who are the guards, with four eyes, the protectors of the path, having the eyes of heroic men, O king, hand over this soul to them. Confer on him welfare without any dangers." (11)

"With broad nose, delighting in taking charge of the lives of men, having a dark-brown colour (*Udumbala*) the messengers of Yama wander about following men." (12)

It is their mother Sarama who traced the location of

the cows that had been stolen and concealed in the mountain caves of Vala.

"When Indra and the Angirases had been making their search, Sarama was able to find nourishment for the son." (I-62-3)

Here the nourishment is the milk from the cow and as such what she found were the cows.

"Sarama found out the hidden place firmly closed down, where the cows had been concealed, whereby it is that human beings have enjoyment." (I-72-8)

Here it is made clear that the son for whom Sarama found out the location of the stolen cows is Man himself. Wisdom is the nourishment for the life of Man. Without wisdom, Man, is in a state of starvation.

"This Sarama found out the hidden cave in the mountain." (III-31-6)

"When, O Indra, you broke open the mountain, Sarama had already made herself present there in advance of you." (IV-16-8)

"Sarama, reaching the Law, won the cows." (V-45-7)

"Sarama discovered the cows along the path of Law." (V-45-8)

This achievement of Sarama is mentioned many times in another song about her (X-108). There is nothing in the Vedas to show that the dogs were considered as impure. That is a later belief in the thought of India. I do not know whence this new attitude towards dogs came into the belief of India. In the *Avesta* also there is only respect for dogs. There are three chapters in the *Vendidad*, a part of the *Avesta* (Chapters 13 to 15) where there is a reference to the dogs. They are looked upon with respect. Just as dogs search for lost cows and locate their hiding places when they are stolen, the search for wisdom hidden from Man through ignorance is done by an agency that is thought of as alike a search-dog. In the *Rigveda* we do not see people trying to grope through the gloom of ignorance towards the light, which began to shine only in the *Upanishads*. This is not a correct presentation of the truth about the position of philosophy in the *Rigveda*. Philosophy had advanced very far by the time the extant songs

in the *Rigveda* had been composed, and we perceive a backgound of advanced philosophy in it.

When we put the two exploits of Indra together, we find another important trait in the genius of the people. That is the harmony between wisdom and active life. In the whole of the *Rigveda* there is not even the faintest hint of the world being a place of sin and suffering, escape from this world being the only way of attaining real, eternal happiness. Wisdom is in this world of activity and the activity in the world is within the realm of wisdom. It is Indra who had killed Vritra through his physical might and it was the same Indra who had recovered light after destroying the enemies of wisdom who concealed wisdom after stealing it. The Maruts who pre-eminently helped Indra in his exploit of killing Vritra were representatives of physical power, drinkers of *Soma*, which is the symbol of physical activity, and they were also singers, the symbol of wisdom. Similarly, the Angirases and Brihaspati who are associated with Indra in his exploits against Vala who had stolen and concealed the cows in a cave in the mountains, are singers and also closely related to ritualism. Ritualism, wisdom and art went together. There has never been a conflict between ritualism or religion, wisdom or philosophy, and art, in India. This is a Vedic trait in the national genius of the people.

IV. The Region Of Light

In Vedic times, people in India did not consider the earth as a place of sin and suffering and they never desired to leave this world and go to another region and to another condition of life where there would be happiness. Even when there is a reference to sin and suffering, and to bondage, there is no desire for any one to depart from this world. Such suffering is not an inherent feature of the world and can be avoided easily. Man can be happy in this life on earth. Just as references to sin and suffering are very rare in the *Rigveda*, a desire to remain in another region is also very rare. People wanted to remain in this world where they enjoy life so long as they can live. Practically there is no prayer that one may be taken over to heaven so that the sufferings of life in this world may end and that a life of happiness may be enjoyed in another world.

There is a song about *Soma*. In all the verses there is a refrain at the end that "the drops of *Soma* may flow all round for the sake of Indra." In the first five verses there is a glorification of the *Soma* that is offered at the sacrifices to the gods. Then there are six more verses in which there is a description of a region of light. In the second of these six verses there is a prayer to *Soma* that the singer may be taken over to a particular region, and in the following four verses there is the prayer that "he may be made eternal in that region." The other refrain continues in all the verses, and follows this prayer. The passage where there is the prayer that he may be made permanent in that region is also common to the four verses. The song is IX-113.

"Where, O purified and purifying *Soma*, the poet singing the chants of song remains supreme on account of *Soma* pressed with the stones, producing joy through *Soma*." (6)

The verse does not end here; it is joined to the following verse.

"Where there is light eternal, in which region is placed

the heaven, O the purifying and purified *Soma*, place me in that region of immortality, free from injury." (7)

The previous verse has to be joined to this verse. Here the prayer is for reaching such a region, and permanence in that region is what is prayed for in the succeeding verses.

"Where there is the king Yama, the son of Vivasvat, where there is the threshold to the celestial region, where there are these young waters, make me immortal in that region." (8)

"Where movement is according to one's will, in the threefold celestial region, in the threefold heaven of the region of light, where the worlds are full of light, make me immortal in that region." (9)

"Where there are pleasures and intense pleasures, where there is the seat of the Sun-god, where there is satisfaction and contentment, make me immortal in that region." (10)

"Where there is bliss and enjoyment, happiness and intense happiness, where the eagerness for enjoyments is attained, make me immortal in that region." (11)

There are many words that mean the divisions of the higher regions of light and the further divisions of such regions. Yama is, in later mythology, the lord of the region to which the sinners go after death. But in the *Rigveda* he is the first mortal to know the Path and to traverse that Path to reach the higher regions of eternal happiness. He is the son of Vivasvat. He is Yima in the *Avesta* and Jamshid of modern times. There are various places where the waters are spoken of as young ladies. What is noteworthy in the description is the light and joy and freedom emphasised as special features of the region. These are what men experience in their life on earth, and when they have to die, they want that to continue eternally in the region above. There does not seem to be any indication of a dread of returning to this world of suffering; the passages have to be interpreted in the light of others which speak about the happiness in this life and about the eagerness to continue in this world throughout the span allotted to Man. If Man cannot enjoy that happiness eternally in this world, let him have it as an eternal feature in that

other region. What is dimly indicated is the fear of death and the termination of happiness. The description shows the optimism of the people and their eagerness to continue to live on this earth.

Another point that is of special interest is the unity of religious rituals and light, which is symbolical of wisdom in the *Rigveda*. The whole song is about *Soma*, the chief element in a ritual, and the fruit of that ritual is the attainment of the region of light and freedom. There is no conflict between ritualism and knowledge. Both form a unity. Still another point that is noteworthy in the context is the place of art in human happiness. The very first sentence in the description of the region is about its songs by poets. The emphasis on poetry and song in human happiness is very prominent in the *Rigveda*.

It is very difficult to understand the distinction between a few words. There are many words meaning happiness, joy, pleasure and other features and the words are also mutually related to one another with just a preposition which signifies "intense", prefixed to the original word.

There is a possibility that what is dealt with in this poem is not a region, but a state. We cannot completely dissociate this poem from the innumerable references to the winning of light found in the *Rigveda*. It was Indra who won that light for humanity. In winning that light *Soma* too played a part, though it is essentially the songs of the Sages that played the most important part. In this poem, *Soma* and Indra are the most conspicuous factors. When *Soma* is asked to establish the singer in that region (verse 7), and when there is a prayer that one may be made immortal there, what is meant is that the light may be made available to him and that he may ever remain in that state of illumination. Dirghatamas says that when a person receives the light of wisdom (I-164-21), there is a double personality produced in him, one immortal and the other mortal (I-164-30, 38). This light and this immortality in that region of light may be identified with the light and the immortality mentioned by Dirghatamas. In this sense, there is no prayer to lift a person from this world of mortality and darkness to the higher world of light and immortality.

V. The Dawn

For a description of what is beautiful in Nature, depicted in a very beautiful way in poetry, there is practically nothing in Sanskrit literature, and perhaps little in any literature, that can compare with what has been achieved by the Vedic poets in describing the phenomenon of Dawn. The bright colours accompanying the sunrise have produced in the poets of the Vedas an impression of charm which, by its very beauty, pours forth in the form of charming poetry. The theme is beautiful and a beautiful theme cannot flow from the heart of a poet except in beautiful language. The external beauty of the Dawn reflected on the imaginative heart of the poet and then it shed down on the world outside with increased beauty, if such a thing were possible. In the mighty torrents of a river in flood, the Vedic poets saw a beautiful damsel, and sometimes a heroic warrior. In the terrible storm, they saw handsome young men in shining robes and glittering ornaments, armed with golden weapons and wandering about with their songs. And in the beautiful Dawn they saw a beautiful young woman.

In the case of the rivers, the number of poetic specimens is relatively small. In the case of the storm (the Maruts), there are many pieces in the *Rigveda,* and each is as beautiful as the other. The same is the case with the Dawn. There is beautiful imagery, sublime ideas, grand personification, charming form, attractive language with a musical cadence. As in the case of the Maruts (next chapter), it is difficult to make a selection of a single piece as a specimen. Each has an individuality and not one can truly represent the others in poetic charm. Yet I have selected one song to give selections from (I-123), and then I have added some select pieces from other songs to bring out the whole picture in full relief.

"The huge chariot of the very hospitable Dawn has been made ready with horses yoked to it. The immortal

gods have taken their seats in it. From the dark regions the noble Dawn has also mounted her chariot, the majestic, desiring to bring happiness into the homes of the people." (1)

"She has woken up earlier than the entire living world. She wins victory, she is grand, making immense gifts. The Dawn, the young maiden, being born again and again, has begun to take a look at the world from her high position. The Dawn has come as the First when the gods are invoked in advance." (2)

"The sister of Bhaga, the family relative of Varuna, O Dawn, may you be agreeable to be adored as the First. Thereafter may he be driven back who may try to bring about suffering to us and may we be able to conquer him with help from you, the ever hospitable, and your chariot." (5)

"May there arise happy thoughts and also riches in the home. The Fires have already risen up, flaming aloft. The Dawns, when they shine, bring to full manifestation the covetable riches that are kept concealed in gloom." (6)

"There is one going out and there is the other coming forward. Thus the day and the night, with forms different from each other, move together one after the other. Of these two that move about in succession to each other, one keeps the darkness within the cave, and the Dawn has shone up coming forward with her brilliantly shining chariot." (7)

"The Dawns are all alike on this day and they will be alike tomorrow. They proceed towards the long stretching abode of Varuna. They are free from all faults. Each one of them is able to go round in a moment, carrying out her work, traversing thirty-three fathoms." (8)

"Like a handsome maiden, proud of her form, O Goddess, you come towards the god who is longing to meet you. You, a young lady, full of sweet smiles, shining brilliantly, you expose your breasts to the full view of the world." (10)

"With a charming appearance, you, like a young lady groomed by her mother, present the charm of your body to the view of the world. You are auspicious. May you shine forth extensively, so that no other Dawn may be

able to attain the beauty which is in you." (11)

The reference must be to a young girl who has been groomed by her mother on the day of the wedding, to be presented to the audience on the occasion. That is the time when the ladies don the best of robes. This may be compared to the description of the Maruts as the bridegrooms. They saw only a young and beautiful woman when they looked at the colourful Dawn. The term "exposing the breast" need not be taken as meaning the actual removal of the robes from the breasts and exposing them to the free view of the people. The reference must be to the way in which they wear the robes, so that the breast becomes very prominent to the view though covered by the clothes. Elsewhere the Dawn is compared to a dancing girl.

"Like a dancing girl, the dawn puts on colourful robes on her body. Like a cow exposing her udder, she exposes her breast. She spreads light in the world for all to enjoy. She has opened up the darkness and comes out like cows coming out of the stall, when it is opened up." (I-92-4)

"Like a stylish lady who decorates her body, she exposes her breast; like a tender girl, she exhibits everything that is pleasing in her. She wakes up those who are asleep like one who prepares the early morning breakfast. Always, without any break, she comes again and again, in advance of those that are yet to come on later days." (I-124-4)

"This, the greatest of the ladies, does not discriminate between those who are her near family relatives and those who are not her near family relatives, in the matter of enabling them to have a full view of herself. She is proud of her faultless form. She does not withhold her brilliance either from the small or from the important people." (I-24-6)

The broad-mindedness indicated here is worth noting. There is no difference between members of one's family and the near relatives and those who are far removed in the matter of family relationship. Similarly, there is no difference between those who are in high position and who are rich, and those who may be in lowly positions and who have no riches of their own. This shows the general outlook of the people of the time. The Dawn is spoken of as the greatest lady on account of this generosity and this even-mindedness.

"Like a lady who has no brother, the Dawn turns away from other men and also like a lady who has risen out of the grave of her husband, seeking riches, wearing shining robes, the dawn lets the dress drop down from her charming form, like a loving wife exposing her charms before her own husband, like a smiling lady." (I-124-7)

The first half of the verse is rather difficult to interpret correctly and the interpretations differ from scholar to scholar. It is a brother who supports the family, especially the women-folk in the family, as the name itself suggests. The word is from the root "*Bhar*" (to maintain). The father is only the protector, the word being derived from the root "*Pa*" (to protect). When a lady has no brother to maintain her, she has to depend on the charity of other people. But a proud lady does not allow herself to become the victim of such a situation. When the husband dies, the wife lies down in the grave in which the body of the dead husband is laid, and then she rises from that grave. So the word "*Gartaruk*" means a widow, the meaning of the word being, "one who rises from the grave." She too has to depend on the charity of others. But a proud lady does not allow herself to be in such a humiliating position. She turns away from other men. In the same way, the Dawn is also a proud lady and she does not approach any one for charity. She makes her appearance before the world and then she simply moves away from their sight.

In the second half two situations are suggested. A loving wife puts on charming robes when she meets her husband and then she lets the robes drop from her body in his private presence and exposes her charms. Similarly, a lady goes to her friend outside wedlock and then with her face full of smiles, she lets fall from her body the magnificent robes which she has put on and then exposes the charms of her body to him in his private presence. In the same way the Dawn also removes the darkness which formed her robes and she appears before the full view of the world. It has already been said in the previous verse that in this matter she makes no difference between the one and the other according to their family relationships, wealth or status.

"This Dawn has made her appearance for us to have a view of her, like a lady of style who is proud of her bodily charms, like a very lovely lady who has emerged from her bath. This daughter of the heaven, having driven away the enemies and dispersed the darkness, has made her appearance with full effulgence." (V-81-5)

The arrangement for bathing must be taken note of. They must have had tanks to which people went for a bath and from which they came out upwards after the bath. There is the term "upwards" connected with the bath, in the text.

"This daughter of the heaven, having turned away from other men, like a respectable young lady, drops her robes from her body. She grants covetable riches to those who make offerings. The young lady has again formed the glow of her light as she had been doing on previous days." (V-80-6)

There has already been the statement about the Dawn letting her robes drop like a lady in the presence of her husband or of the friend outside wedlock. Here also it has been repeated. This should not be interpreted to mean that she made her body bare; that would be revolting. What is dropped by the Dawn is the darkness which serves as a robe for her and which covers her body. This must be some kind of mantle worn outside and above the actual dress. It is that dress which reveals the charms of her body. That is what an actress also does. She puts on her proper robes for appearing on the stage and above that she wears a mantle to protect that inner costume. In all cases it must be taken as meaning that the Dawn dropped the outer mantle and exposed the charms of her body through her dress which was till then hidden by the mantle. This also shows how careful they were about their dress in the Vedic age.

The Dawn has become a goddess and all the features that are found in the divinities of the *Rigveda* are noticed in the case of the Dawn also.

"The Dawn spreads out various kinds of happy riches as if she were spreading out the cattle in the pasture, as if she were the river spreading out in big waves. She never allows the divine ordinances to be violated. She

is noticed through the rays of the sun, becoming thus quite visible." (I-92-12)

This steady devotion to the divine ordinances is mentioned in many other places also. She brings the gods to the place of worship so that they could drink the *Soma*, a function usually assigned to the Fire-god.

"O Dawn, escort all the gods hither, in order that they may drink the *Soma*, from the atmospheric region." (I-48-2a)

This has special reference to waking up the gods in the morning and it is not a transfer to her of the functions of the Fire-god.

"In so far as she has awakened the men who are to perform the worship, she has rendered a good turn to the poets." (I-113-9b)

The gods are spoken of as waking up along with the Dawn *(Ushar-budhah)*. She rides on a chariot like the other gods. The Dawn shone with her shining chariot (I-123-17). She has a shining chariot (III-61-2). Her chariot has shining colours and moves gently (I-49-2). She has a chariot with all colours (VII-75-6), and that chariot is big and lustrous (VII-78-1). The chariot is yoked by its own powers (VII-78-4). Many things are mentioned about the chariot and the horses that draw it.

The Dawn prepared a path for the Sun to travel (I-113-12). This function is attributed to Varuna. In one place it is said that she is a young lady who shines on account of the eye of her lover (I-92-11). The Sun-god (Surya) follows from behind the Goddess Dawn who shines brilliantly, as a lover follows a young lady (I-115-2). We cannot dissociate one from the other. The two lovers of the Dawn are the same. The Dawn produced the Sun, the worship and the Fire (VII-78-3).

The Dawn is specially related to the Twin-gods, the Ashvins. The Ashvins accompany the Dawn, the daughter of the heaven (I-183-2). The Dawn became the companion of the Ashvins (IV-52-2). "O Dawn, you are the companion of the Ashvins" (IV-52-3). "O Dawn, you awaken the Ashvins" (VIII-19-17). It is the songs of the Dawn that have awakened the Ashvins (III-58-1).

"O daughter of the heaven, come hither along with

victories, place riches on us" (I-30-22). "The Dawn, the daughter of the heaven, possessor of riches, has exterminated the enemies, those who do harm" (I-48-8). She is the life and the breath of all (I-48-10). "O Dawn, possessor of riches, place glory along with heroic sons on those poets who sing about you" (V-70-6). It will be found that the Dawn has all the features connected with a divinity.

The name *Ushas* (Dawn) means "illumination". That is the great illumination at the time of the rising of the Sun. The word is connected with the word "Aura." The description has the phenomenon of Nature as the basis. But when we read the descriptions, we see little of the morning hue in the eastern skies; we see a very handsome lady in beautiful robes. There are various patterns of description in the *Rigveda*. In the case of Indra, there is the phenomenon of Nature in the form of the clouds and the breaking open of the clouds and letting the waters flow freely along the rivers. But Indra is not himself any one factor connected with the phenomenon. We see only a great warrior riding on his chariot and fighting with the enemies of culture. But some sort of association with a phenomenon of Nature is noticeable in the descriptions, especially when the fight with the dragon Vritra is taken up. In the case of the rivers, we see only the river in flood. We do not see any personality in the descriptions, one with a human form and with human activities. Even when the river aspect is in the background and when the goddess aspect is prominent, as in the case of Sarasvati, we do not see any person before us. Sarasvati may be a mother; but we have only the impression of an abstract divinity. Perhaps it is when she is definitely spoken of as a mother giving milk from her breast (I-164-49), that we get a glimpse of a person. In all other cases, we do not have any figure before our eyes. In the case of the Maruts, there is an alternation between the phenomenon of Nature and some handsome young men. In the case of the Ushas, we see only a person. We completely miss here the phenomenon of Nature. There are gods like the Ashvins and Rudra in whose case we do not know at all what phenomena of Nature there are behind the descriptions. We see only a person, with no connection with any

natural phenomenon. There is the case of Varuna. We do not know what phenomenon of Nature it is that is behind the conception of that God. And in the descriptions we find no person at all. We have the impression of some abstract majestic presence, of some great power. In this way there is a characteristic feature in the description of every god in the *Rigveda,* and the Dawn represents a special pattern.

There are about twenty songs relating to the Dawn. The name appears many hundreds of times. In the songs about the Twin-gods, the Ashvins, the name appears very prominently and that is also the case with the songs about the other gods. No one can miss the grace with which the personality of the Dawn is drawn. Certainly we get the impression of a very charming figure, when we read the descriptions of the Dawn; they are very realistic and graphic and the similes with common objects of experience in our life, like the dancing girl and the ordinary girls wearing beautiful robes, add to the graphic nature of the picture. No one can say that it is the creation of priests who are incapable, on account of their profession, to draw such a lovely picture in words of a charming lady. Nor is any set of dry rituals, the occasion for such a painting. The rituals must have been centres of active life representing the realities of life. Such rituals do not shut out the beauty in life. It cannot also be said that the Dawn is not associated with rituals. We see the ritualistic setting at every step in the description.

The brilliance of Nature has appealed to the imagination of the poets of the Vedas in a very strong way. We see little of darkness, except as what is necessary as a contrast to illumination. There is not found that atmosphere of sadness in the heart of the people on account of the presence of darkness in the world. We do not see either the dark and chilling cold of winter nor the snow that takes away life from men. The Vedic poets lived in a happy region of light and joy. That is how we have the Dawn, along with the Twin-gods, the Ashvins, the Sun-gods like Surya and Savitar and Vishnu. They all form a sort of family. Dawn is thus representative of the members of this family of light and joy.

VI. The Storm

The *Rigveda* is Nature poetry. The poets did not make any real distinction between animate Nature and inanimate Nature, nor between man and the lower gradations of life like animals and trees. They saw their own likeness everywhere. They had their life and they saw the same life everywhere in the world. The range within Nature dealt with in the *Rigveda* is rather limited. There are various objects of Nature in the world that find a place in the poetry of a later day in Sanskrit and in the poetry of other languages, which are not found treated in the *Rigveda*. We see the cows prominently emphasised and also the bulls. We find horses often mentioned in the *Rigveda*. Kites appear in the poetry. Wolves are very prominent. But we find no antelopes and no peacocks, no singing birds nor birds with beautiful plumage. There is only mention of the mountains and of the oceans; but there are no descriptions of them. But the rivers are very graphically described. The forests and the trees and the creepers and the flowers, though mentioned, do not come within the range of the poetry of the *Rigveda*. The stars and the moon are mentioned; but we do not see people sitting in the bright moonlight or under the starlit sky.

Among the phenomena of Nature, special mention must be made of the storm and the dawn and the bright rising sun and the sun at noon. All the objects of Nature are endowed with life and they respond to the feelings of Man; they themselves know and feel. The poets have sympathy for them and they are in communion with the objects of Nature. They see human beings behind the phenomenon of the storm. The *Rigvedic* people thought of the storm as seven brothers forming a group. We do not know why they are spoken of as seven in number. There is some mystery about the number and we have completely lost the clue to help us solve the mystery. In the songs

about the storm, we sometimes see the terrible phenomenon of Nature with trees falling before it and we also see a group of very handsome young men decorated with shining ornaments. The *Rigvedic* poets saw beautiful young ladies in the rivers in terrible floods, and they saw handsome young men in the storm. It is here that we can detect the poetic genius of the people. The dawn is in itself beautiful and if it is presented as a very beautiful young lady, it is only natural. In the case of the sun also, there is no real change from the real objects of Nature to the objects described in poetry. There may be some sort of idealisation. But in the case of the storm and of the rivers, there is a real change. We find in the descriptions, factors that are not noticed at all in the objects of Nature.

There are places where the Maruts are definitely the storms known to us. They shake the trees and even the mountains and the entire earth trembles.

"They cause the mountains to tremble. They uproot the trees that are the lords of the forests, making them shake off from one another. Along with your entire hosts of followers, you go about, O Maruts, freely forward like a man intoxicated with drinks." (I-39-5)

"You are like big buffaloes, full of supernatural powers, adorned with various colours, strong in yourself like the mountains, easily speeding about; you eat off the forests like the elephants with their trunks when you have yoked the red animals for drawing your chariots, joining your strength to theirs." (I-64-7)

They are terrific in their appearance. All tremble at their sight. They move forward with force causing fear in the minds of all.

"Your strength is terrible, your powers are steady. The hosts are terrific. Your burning forces are brilliant. Your minds are full of wrath. The noise produced by the hosts of the Maruts is turbulent." (VII-65-4)

"In birth you were, O Maruts, connected with terrors. You are frightful, with minds that are terrific, quick in movement. When you are connected with your grandeur and with your powers, every one trembles in fear, seeing the light." (VII-68-2)

"Like the roars of those who have won a victory in

battle, you make a thundering noise through your impetuous powers, when, O heroes, you go forward." (I-23-11)

"When along with your determinations, you came to the cave of the powerful Bull, Indra, he began to roar out of fear, like the sky thundering." (VIII-7-26).

The above are specimen passages to show that the poets had the storm and the howl and the falling trees in their minds when they sang about the Maruts. But this is not merely a realistic picture of the phenomenon of the storm. They saw human beings in such a phenomenon. There are the human and the tender aspects of this picture of the storm. They are seven in number and they are brothers, all of the same appearance and of the same age.

"The Maruts, the sons of Rudra, are young, never ageing, the destroyers of the miserly, and they grew up high like the mountains, their progress being never stopped by any one. With their strength, they pull down everything on the earth and in the celestial regions, that may be very firm and steady." (I-64-3)

"Among them none is elder, none is younger. They grew up as brothers for the sake of a happy life. Rudra, the good worker, is their youthful father. Prishni, the cow that yields plenty of milk easily, is their mother. Let there be happy days for the Maruts." (V-60-5)

They are all bright and very handsome in their appearance. They wear shining weapons and glittering ornaments.

"Like rich bridegrooms, you have decorated your bodies with golden ornaments and you shine with your natural personality. In order to produce beauty, you have created a great glow in your bodies as well as in your chariots, you yourselves being handsome and powerful." (V-60-4)

Bridegrooms don shining robes and wear golden ornaments and make themselves and their surroundings very charming. The Maruts are compared to such bridegrooms.

Their chariots are golden (V-57-1), the wheels are golden (I-88-5) and the legs of the horses are also golden (VIII-7-27). They carry weapons made of gold (I-64-11). They carry an axe and other weapons (I-37-2).

"They carry an axe, they carry a spear, they are very

intelligent, they are dexterous in handling a bow and they have arrows with them, carried in a quiver. Their horses are very praiseworthy and so are their chariots. Prishni is their mother. They carry all kinds of praiseworthy weapons. May such Maruts go forward to attain victory." (V-57-2)

"You carry spears on your shoulders, you wear anklets on your legs, you have plenty of golden ornaments on your chest; you shine brilliantly in your chariot. You glow like fire and you have weapons in both your hands. You have spread golden gears on your entire heads." (V-54-11)

Though they have a terrific appearance, they are also playful and pleasing to look at.

"The Maruts run fast like war-horses, and like those who go to a festivity, they, the mortals, adorn themselves beautifully. They abide in a mansion like children who had been bathed and made clean; like boys they play about when they yield water to humanity." (VII-56-16)

They are also compared to children brought up by a careful mother (X-78-6).

The Maruts are singers. It must be the howling noise made by the storm which the poets speak of as songs. They blow their bugles (I-85-1). Indra tells the Maruts, "O Maruts, the songs of adoration which you have sung here have given me joy, while, O heroes, you have composed a poem which is worthy of praise" (I-85-10). The songs sung by the Maruts in praise of Indra are mentioned in many more places in the *Rigveda*. The Maruts are called the singers in many places.

The Maruts are the sons of Rudra, another great god in the *Rigveda*, and they are spoken of as the sons of Rudra or simply as Rudras. Their mother is Prishna, "what is spotted," evidently a cow, as expressly stated in the *Rigveda*. They have as their consort the goddess called Rodasi. This name appears in the dual number to mean the heaven and the earth, and in the sense of the consort of the Maruts, the word is used in the singular number. The Maruts are also associated with the lightning. They bring rain and this shows that they are definitely connected with the phenomenon of storm, with thunder and downpour of water. They are heroes or strong ones, the words being

"*Vira*" and "*Nara*". The former word has retained its meaning in later Sanskrit, while the latter means simply "man" in later Sanskrit. But its Iranian counterpart is found even in modern Persian as "*Niroo*" which means "an army."

The Maruts are the closest allies of Indra and they helped the latter in his fight against the dragon Vritra. They drink *Soma* and they get the first offer of *Soma* at rituals. This is considered a great honour, to be first served with *Soma*. Indra is called *Marutvan*, "one who has the Maruts as allies." This is the third of the chief traits in their character. The other two are that they are the storm and that they are also young and handsome men who play on the bugle and sing songs. The terrific aspect is joined to the elegant and the beautiful aspects. Heroism is combined with youthful love. For character delineation, the picture of the Maruts is superb from that artistic point of view. They appear throughout the *Rigveda* as objects of adoration.

The Maruts represent truly the genius of the people of India as citizens and as heroes. They were pleasant to look at and young and handsome. They wore their weapons and they did not do so as simply wearing a symbol of divinity. They had their weapons because they wanted such weapons to fight against the enemy. No one is a hero who cannot hit an enemy when the need arises. But weapons are to be discharged or used only towards enemies and not against civilized people.

"O Maruts, whatever weapons which you or any mortal may send and which come on us, avert them from us with your powers, with your valour, on account of the protection which we get from you." (I-39-8)

"Everywhere may you keep off the weapon from us. May not your terrible thoughts reach us here." (VII-56-5)

They are the sons of the god Rudra, and Rudra is also often prayed to by the poets to keep off the arrows from the good people. The Maruts have also, like the father, some healing remedies.

"O Maruts, bring us the remedies which belong to you." (VIII-20-23)

"What remedies there may be in the Sindhu river,

in the Asikni river, in the oceans, O Maruts, whatever remedies there may be in the mountains, all of them, may you bring to us, knowing their positions." (VIII-20,25,26 a)

The Maruts participated in the fights of Indra against the dragon Vritra, and Indra was able to accomplish his exploits through their aid. In the songs about such help that Indra received from the Maruts in his exploits, he is specially spoken of as "one who has the Maruts as allies," *Marutvan* (1-100-1ff). A poet asks them to kill Vritra himself with the assistance of Indra (I-23-9). They are even spoken of as having smitten the dragon Vritra down independently (VIII-7-23). A poet says:

"Now, how is it, why is it, that you have become a bad friend in that you have abandoned Indra? Who will look for your companionship?" (VIII-7-31)

This must be a reference to their independent action in having smitten down the dragon. It is not a condemnation; it is only a glorification of their exploits undertaken independently. One poet makes the Maruts ask Indra why the latter wanted to kill them, the brother. They ask him not to kill them in the fray (I-170-2).

This is only a frightful nature of Indra, even his companions being frightened at his prowess. The passages should not be taken in their literal sense in such contexts. As a matter of fact, in such cases we have only some selections from the whole song. The real context is not found in the song as it is now available.

In the description of the Maruts, we get the harmonious blending of factors that are in their nature irreconcilable. In the ordinary world we see so many facts that appear to be incapable of being reconciled to one another. But a poet sees in his vision so many facts that are hidden from the eyes of ordinary people, but which enable him to form such apparently conflicting facts of the external world into a harmonious unit. That is what is called Art. Art is the happy blending into a harmonious unity of things that are supposed to be incapable of being brought together. The greater the difference between the constituent facts, the greater is the beauty of the unit formed out of them.

In the Maruts we do not see any sign of the thoughts

of the primitive people afraid of the spirits that are supposed to abide in the facts of Nature and attempting to propitiate such spirits to ward off any danger that may arise from them and to gain any favours which they may grant. There is no religion in the form of Nature worship. There is no anthropomorphism. We see only Nature poetry of a high order in the *Rigveda*. The poets see beyond the bare physical facts of the world and they express what they see in beautiful poetry. There is communion between the poets and the facts of Nature. The poets see life and all the implications of life in such objects of Nature. They see in them their own companions. The objects of Nature respond to their feelings of companionship. This is best illustrated in the songs about the Maruts.

Scholars speak of the malevolent nature of the Maruts, inherited from their father, Rudra. No god in the *Rigveda* is malevolent. A malevolent god is one who takes delight in injuring men. Wrath and the bringing about of suffering to innocent humanity are what make a god malevolent. Such a nature is not found in the case of any Vedic god. Wicked people bring about their ruin from within themselves, and if gods destroy them it is not any malevolent nature in the gods that is responsible for this. The Maruts, like any other god, are essentially kind gods doing good to humanity.

VII. Sin And Release

Shunahshepa is a young boy who was bought by a king for sacrifice to God Varuna. His father had three sons and he was too poor to maintain them. He was desirous of selling one of them so that with the price that he would receive, he could find food for the others. At that time there was a king who had promised to sacrifice his son to Varuna if he would be blessed with a son. A son was born. But the king delayed and delayed the sacrifice and in the end it was not possible for him to sacrifice his boy. Varuna was angry and the king developed dropsy. To propitiate the God, he made a promise to offer a Brahmin boy in the place of his own son who was a Kshatriya (warrior class). He wanted to purchase a Brahmin and Shunahshepa was readily available. So the boy was purchased and brought to the king, who had him tied to a stake for being sacrificed to Varuna. In that precarious condition, Shunahshepa prayed to Varuna and to the other gods to save him from such a calamity. And he was saved by the gods.

There are seven songs by Shunahshepa (I-24-30). They are not what a boy would sing. There are thus two possibilities. Either Shunahshepa was a mature poet and the story gathered round his personality at a much later time on account of some reference to the stake and to protection from that calamity, found in the songs; or some one composed the songs with that story of the boy as the theme and the boy became the singer of the songs only as a character in them. The episode must have been very popular and it is mentioned elsewhere also in the *Rigveda*. Kumara of the Atri family refers to Agni as having saved Shunahshepa from the stake by loosening the ropes (V-2-7).

If the songs assigned to Shunahshepa are much earlier, then the probability is the first, the story having taken this form later. If Shunahshepa's songs are later, then the story

must have been familiar at the time and the songs must have been composed by some one with this story as the theme. My own view is that the former is the true position. The story gathered round Shunahshepa later. It is full of pathos and a pathetic note is present in the songs also. There are two songs (I-24,25) in which we can note this touch, but in the others we find only the regular prayers and adorations to the gods.

Shunahshepa sits in front of the Altar and he sings his songs. The start is in the form of a question and an answer about the god to whom he should address his song.

"Now whose, of which god among the immortals, shall we contemplate the fair name? Who will hand us over back to the great Aditi, so that we shall see the father and the mother?" (1)

"Of the god Agni the first, shall we contemplate the fair name among the immortals. He will hand us over back to the great Aditi, so that we shall see the father and the mother." (2)

Aditi is perfection, freedom from injury. The father must be the ultimate wisdom and the mother must be the language. The first Agni is the Fire burning in the Altar. There is a feeling that one is perfect in his real nature and that his perfection has been taken away from him. He wants that perfection to be restored to him. By wisdom, spoken of as father, and by language spoken of as mother, what is meant is the right idea and the right language for first class poetry. There are other places in the *Rigveda*, where wisdom is pictured as a father and language as mother, and after scrutinizing all contexts, I am satisfied about the identification of the father and the mother as wisdom and language.

These two verses are followed by three verses of adoration addressed to the Sun-god. Then there are ten more verses addressed to Varuna and the real theme of the poem appears in these.

"Verily, your imperial sway, your physical might, your intellectual power, even these birds flying in the air have not been able to reach, nor those waters which flow on without a stop, nor even those who can stand against the force of the wind." (6)

"In the bottomless expanse, the king Varuna has planted the round of forest trees above, he with holy powers. They come downwards with the roots upwards. The symbol to know them is placed within us." (7)

Such an imagery of the tree representing the world with its roots above and the branches and leaves below, is continued in the *Kathopanishad* (VI-1) and in the *Bhagavad Gita* (XV-1). There is mention of a tree representing the world as seen by the wise, though with no such specification, twice again in the *Rigveda* itself (I-164-20 to 22; X-135-1). The greatness of Varuna is continued:

"Verily it is Varuna who has made this wide path for the Sun to traverse; he constructed the steps where there were no steps to set one's foot. And he denounces those who break the heart."(8)

There is a great difference of opinion among scholars about "those who break the heart." My own view is that Varuna simply denounces those who try to strike at his heart saying that Varuna has no such great powers which people ascribe to him. The greatness is continued:

"O king, you have a hundred, a thousand medicines. May your wide, deep good-will be directed towards me. Stop the sins even from far off and throw them away. If we have committed any sins, throw them away from us."(9)

"Those stars that were placed aloft were seen at night; where have they gone by daytime? The ordinances of Varuna are what cannot be resisted. The moon comes shining bright at night."(10)

"Adoring you with the song I make this request to you. One who sacrifices hopes for that by giving you oblations. O Varuna, remain free from wrath on this occasion. O much-praised one, may you not steal away our life's span."(11)

"They say this to me by day and by night. This symbol to know shines up from the heart. Whom Shunahshepa invoked when he is caught, may that king Varuna release us."(12)

"Shunahshepa invoked the God when he was caught, tied on to the three stakes. May the king Varuna release him; may the one who knows, who cannot be resisted, loosen the ropes."(13)

"We try to remove, O Varuna, your wrath through salutations, through worship; lording over us, O mighty one, O wise one, may you loosen the sins that may have been done." (14)

"O Varuna, loosen the rope that is above, the rope that is in the middle, the rope that is below. O God, thereafter may we remain within your ordinance, devoid of sins, so that we may be free." (15)

It will be found that there is frequent change from the first person to the third person and also from the second person to the third person; there is change from the singular to the plural too. This is quite common in the *Rigveda*. This song is mainly about the greatness of Varuna; the element of sin and pardon is only a secondary feature. In the next song of twenty-one short verses there is more emphasis on the element of sin and pardon and there is a touch of his greatness also.

"I have sent up my mind in proper control to you who are full of mercy, just like a chariot-driver lets off his horses, O Varuna, along with our songs." (3)

"A variety of thoughts fall out here and there from me, looking for what I am eagerly longing for, like the birds flying towards their nests." (4)

"He knows the position of the birds when they fly in the sky; he knows the ships that go about in the ocean."(8)

"He knows the path of the wind, wide-sweeping, strong and mighty; he knows those who remain in control of it." (9)

"From that place, he knows all the wonderful secrets when he looks down, whatever has been done and whatever will be done." (11)

"May he with his intellectual powers make our path good; may he carry us across our span of life." (12)

"Thoughts after thoughts of mine wander about like cows moving on to the pasture, wanting to reach him who has his wide surveying eyes." (16)

"May you release our ropes above, our ropes in the middle, our ropes below, so that we may live." (21)

It would be noted that there is reference to worship, *Yajna*, which is in the form of a sacrifice and there is also reference to oblations, which would be impossible if the

boy had been singing from his position tied on to the stake and not participating in a ritual. He prays also on behalf of those who make the offerings. Thus the possibility is that the song was composed by Shunahshepa when he was a man of mature experience and that the story of the boy tied to the stakes arose on the basis of the statements about the ropes and the stakes. The stakes and the ropes are only figurative and not real. It must be noted that the story is known to other Sages in the *Rigveda* who make mention of it. So I put Shunahshepa in a very early period of the history of Vedic literature.

To Shunahshepa, the world is not a place of sin and suffering and the only way to attain happiness is not to get out of this world. He wants to live to the full span of life allotted to him. There is no pessimism. There is a feeling of intense suffering on account of the experience of limitations as he is tied to the stakes with ropes, and he wants wisdom and freedom so that he can be happy in this life and continue this through the whole period of life that is possible. There is here depth of pathos and profundity of thoughts.

This tone of abject helplessness, of surrender to an Almighty, supplication for pardon and protection, is not the usual one in the *Rigveda*. Even in other songs by other Sages, addressed to Varuna, we do not meet with such a tone, though there is mention of sin and suffering and pardon in them also. In the *Rigveda*, the gods are only friends with whom the Sages were in communion and the gods move freely among men. My own view is that this represents the *Bhakti* or devotional current of thought in Indian religion.

In the *Rigveda*, there is no god who is malevolent. They are, without exception, benevolent. They harm those who are the enemies of culture and of the good life, and such people bring about the harm from themselves and not from the malevolent nature of the gods. This is true of Indra, Varuna, Rudra, the Maruts and all the other gods.

VIII. The Poet At The Confluence

The *Rigveda* is supposed to be a collection of adorations addressed by the people to the powers hiding behind the various objects of Nature in order to ward off their wrath and also to secure favours from such powers. But this is not a very fair statement about the objects that are described in the *Rigveda*. There is no doubt that there are adorations addressed to certain powers that do not come within the normal experience of the people. But this Nature is quite different from the Nature that becomes the object of worship by people out of fear or out of a longing for favours. There are beliefs among primitive peoples that the objects of Nature are presided over by evil powers that can do some harm to Man and that can also bestow favours on him. But such objects of Nature are the trees and the rivers and the mountains and the lakes. They are all objects that come within the normal experience of Man; it is only deities that preside over them who are not within the normal view of Man. We can definitely identify the powers with the objects that come within our normal experience. There are such powers which preside over the rivers and the hills and the trees and other objects. In the case of the *Rigveda*, the objects over which the powers preside are not so easily recognized. The objects of worship in the *Rigveda* are mostly what we cannot see. It is only in the case of a very few such objects of worship that we can identify the objects of Nature also. The Sun-gods come within this category. There is no room for doubt about the Fire. Sarasvati is easily identified as a river though its nature as a personification blurs the real object of Nature. In the case of the Maruts, there are many descriptions that cannot be easily identified in the storm, though they represent the storm. Even when we can identify the objects in Nature with the deity that is worshipped in a poem, there are many features that are

more appropriate to a personification than to the objects in Nature. In the case of others, we do not know exactly what are the objects in Nature with which the objects of such adorations are to be identified. In many cases, the relations of the real object of adoration with the object in Nature is very faint. The fact is that the poets who sing see in their imagination objects that transcend the vision of ordinary men, and also objects that are behind the objects that normal persons can see. We do not even know the exact objects in Nature with which the objects of their songs are related. Such is the case with Rudra, the Ribhus, the Twin-gods called the Ashvins, and Varuna. There is no fear attached to the objects of such adoration found in the *Rigveda* and there is also no great eagerness on the part of the singers to obtain any favours from them. It is more a case of friendly communion. Their joy is in such a communion and not in any profit that they can secure from them.

The poets in the *Rigveda* see certain powers behind the various objects of Nature and they sing in joy on account of this communion with such powers. If they ask for any favours, this is nothing more than the asking for favours from friendly companions, perhaps ones slightly superior. They see life in the objects of Nature; they experience their feelings and the reciprocity of their own friendly feelings towards such powers behind the objects of Nature. There is no surrender to the objects of Nature or to the powers behind such objects. They are all companions of Man. They all respond to the friendly feelings of Man.

I cannot select a better poem from the *Rigvedic* collection to illustrate the relation of Man to Nature than the one in which a sage named Vishvamitra holds a conversation with two rivers at their confluence (III-33). He had gone to a king and he had received rich presents from him as a reward for his learning, his poetic talents and his achievements as a poet. He had all his presents loaded in carts; he had also horses and chariots as presents. He reached the rivers Vipat and Shutudri, the modern Beas and Sutlej, where they join together to form a confluence. The rivers were in flood. He had to cross the rivers with all his belong-

ings. There is a request to the rivers to bend down and give him a path along which he can go with all his belongings. First they express their inability to do this, since they are carrying out a Law of Nature which no one can violate. But later they respond to his friendly pleadings and they bend down and let him pass. The poem contains thirteen verses, and it is in the form of a dialogue. The text does not say which verses form the words of the rivers and which form the words of the sage. We have to depend on ancient indices and ancient commentaries which preserve the tradition, and we have also to depend on the meaning. The first three verses are, according to the index, the words of Vishvamitra, the poet who arrives at the confluence.

"Vipat and Shutudri rush forth in floods of water, starting from the sides of the mountains, full of love, with a smile on their faces, like two mares let loose, like two mother-cows, white in colour and licking the calf." (1)

The ancient indices give these as the words of Vishvamitra who had reached the confluence of the two rivers. But this verse is not addressed to the rivers, though it is given as such in the indices. It is in the third person and is a statement about the rivers. Either it is a soliloquy by Vishvamitra on seeing the rivers in flood, wondering how he could get over to the other side, or it is addressed to his companions who had been travelling with him. The third possibility is that Vishvamitra is only a character in the song and that the opening verse is a statement by the real poet who wrote the song about Vishvamitra and his talk with the rivers. Here follows the address of Vishvamitra to the rivers.

"You have been impelled by Indra, the great god, desiring to speed off; both of you go towards the ocean like two mares yoked to a chariot. You move together, you are swollen and there are big waves in you. You are shining and each of you swells the other." (2)

"I have come straight to the river, who is the best among the mothers; we have come to the mighty Vipat, the auspicious river. You are like two mother-cows licking the calf. Both of you follow the course to a common destination." (3)

Here there is the mention of one of the two rivers in the beginning and immediately there is a change to the dual number in the second half of the verse. The comparison is to a cow licking her calf and proceeding to the stall in the house of the owner in the evening. But the mention of the two cows licking a single calf is rather strange. Such irregularities in number is not uncommon in the *Rigveda*. Now the rivers respond to the sage.

"We are these rivers, filled with a flood of waters. We are proceeding to the destination which the gods have allotted to us. Our flow which has been started at the source is not to be retraced. With what desire is the poet addressing the rivers?" (4)

Here we find that there is the plural number and not the dual number, though they must be speaking about themselves as two in number. Such irregularities are features which are frequently met with in the poetry of the *Rigveda*. The sage replies to the question:

"You are following a course according to Law. I am addressing you with words that are as sacred as the offering of *Soma*. For a short while, I request you to stop (with) your currents. With a heart filled with pious thoughts, I call on you, the river, longing for some protection from you; I am the son of Kushika (the sage Vishvamitra)." (5)

Here also in the first half, the rivers are addressed in the plural, while in the second half, there is only the singular number. The rivers explain their difficulty. They cannot oblige him with such an act.

"The great god Indra has created us, with the *Vajra*, (the Thunderbolt) in his hand. He did so after killing the demon Vritra who had stood encircling the rivers and obstructing their course. The Sun-god, with his beautiful hands, is leading us, and we remain so swollen with waters according to his ordinance." (6)

Here also the rivers speak about themselves in the plural number. The sage continues his entreaties:

"In every way that heroism, that deed of Indra when he tore the dragon to pieces, is worthy of adoration. He killed with his Thunderbolt the one who was covering up the waters in the river. He let loose the waters that were longing to move on." (7)

When Vishvamitra spoke about the deeds of Indra in such terms, the rivers were very much pleased and they spoke to him thus:

"O poet, do not forget this word of yourself. May this ring in the ears of the people even in later epochs in the life of humanity. Regarding your songs, O poet, may you have love for us. May you not create unhappy thoughts about us among men; we offer you this salutation." (8)

This is an entreaty that Vishvamitra shall not ask them to do what they are not free to do, to retract their course. People will consider the rivers as wanting in faithfulness if they do so. But Vishvamitra continues his requests:

"O sisters, listen to me, the poet. He has come to you from a long distance along with carts and with chariots. May you bend down and make yourself easy to cross. May the currents fall below the axle of the chariots, O rivers." (9)

Here it will be noted that again the rivers are addressed in the plural and Vishvamitra addresses them as his sisters. At this very familiar way of addressing them, the rivers were immensely happy and they agreed to respond to his requests.

"O poet, we listen to your words. We know that you have travelled from a long distance with carts and with chariots. I will bend down for your sake, like a youthful and impulsive lady, like a maiden bending down to allow a heroic man to embrace her." (10)

Here also the rivers refer to themselves in the plural and also in the singular number. The way in which the dialogue is worded in this context may be specially noted. The same words are repeated in the request of Vishvamitra and in the reply of the rivers. The words "listen" and "from a long distance with carts and with chariots" are common both to the request and to the reply. So also are the words "bend down." Now, Vishvamitra accepts their favour and addresses them in the most fitting manner. He is very grateful for the passage which they have promised to give him.

"O honoured friend, when the people of the Bharata community have crossed you with great speed, a group of people eager to protect their cows, urged on by Indra, your course that has been started from the source, may again

continue to flow; you are worthy of worship and I gladly accept your kind thoughts towards me." (11)

Here also there is a repetition of the words "course that has been started from its source," which have already appeared in the fourth verse where the rivers replied that they could not retrace their course. Now the whole army of persons who had been accompanying Vishvamitra had crossed the river and he addresses them from the other side.

"The people of the Bharata community have crossed you, who are eager to protect their cows. The poet has enjoyed the good thoughts of the rivers. Now may you again grow swollen with floods, urging forward, full of gifts. Let the flow grow strong. May you go forward in haste." (12)

Here in the first half, Vishvamitra speaks of himself and his party in the third person and then reverts to the first person in addressing the rivers. Vishvamitra belonged to the community of people forming the Vedic nation called the Bharatas. A great hero named Sudas, belonging to the Bharata community, had defeated an alliance of ten foreign kings who had invaded the country, and this had been a famous event known to the people of the time; Vasishtha sings about this victory of the Vedic hero against a combination of ten foreign invaders. Vishvamitra continues his greetings to the rivers and this ends the song.

"May your waves hit against the poles of the chariot. O waters, leave off the ropes that restrict your flow. You are both free from all evil deeds, you are free from all sins; no one can do any injury to either of you. May you not continue your empty state." (13)

Vishvamitra asks the rivers to rise again so that if a cart or chariot should cross the river, the waves may hit against the poles. There had been some ropes, so to speak, tied on to the flow of the waters during the short time when he was crossing the river and he asks the rivers to remove those ropes that had been stopping the flow. They had been violating the ordinances of the gods and he assures the rivers that there would be no sins attached to them for such a violation, that what they had done would not be condemned as an evil deed and that no one would

injure them. In the eighth verse it has been said that the rivers wanted that what Vishvamitra had said about the heroic deeds of Indra should be remembered by people in later epochs also. He assures them that at no time would people condemn them for what they had done and that there would be no harm done to them by the gods.

The whole poem is in a certain metre; but the last verse is in a different one, to mark the close of the poem. This device has been adopted in many songs of the *Rigveda*.

This is one of the most charming songs that I have been able to find in the *Rigveda* and it is also perhaps one of the most charming songs in Sanskrit or in any other language of the world, ancient or modern. In the classics of other countries, love of Nature is not such a prominent feature. I do not know who the poet is. Vishvamitra is a character in the song; there is nothing improbable in his being the poet also. He might have written a song about an event in which he himself played the chief part. If so, Vishvamitra is one of the finest poets whose compositions have been included in the *Rigvedic* collection.

Here is a poet addressing two rivers. He addresses them as sisters. It may mean that they are sisters to each other; but I feel that they are addressed as his own sisters. The rivers know that he is a great poet and they address him also as a poet. The words used are "*Vipra*", "*Jaritar*" and "*Karu*". Vishvamitra speaks of himself also as a poet, "*Karu*". This intimate communion between a poet and two rivers cannot fail to evoke a sense of unity in Nature in the minds of the reader; all differences between Man and the inanimate objects are obliterated and we see only a fraternity in nature in which Man and the objects of Nature are both of equal status. Gods are also brought into the picture. Gods and men and the objects of Nature combine to form a single community. We realise the deep feelings of affection in the heart of Vishvamitra towards the rivers, and the rivers reciprocate the feelings with the same affection.

We see certain devices adopted in handling the language in the song, devices found very often in the poetry of the *Rigveda*. Word are repeated from one verse to

another to express the same idea. There are various similes. There are the mares let loose to go to the battle-field; there are the cows licking the calves when they return in the evening to their stalls from the pastures. There is reference to a youthful and impulsive lady and also to a maiden who bends down to let a hero embrace her. There is serenity when the gods are brought into the picture as having ordered the course of Nature which cannot be violated, since they guard the Law in the working of the world, and this is happily joined on to the beauty in life expressed in the various similes. There is both grandeur and elegance coupled in the same song. There is seriousness associated with human touches in the description.

Who can say that this song is an example of Nature worship by primitive people? Who can deny this poem a place among the best Nature poetry? And this interest in Nature poetry is enhanced by the fact that we do not have any Nature poetry inherited outside Sanskrit from ancient times.

IX. The Rivers

Among the phenomena of Nature which have made a strong impression on the poets of the *Rigveda*, the Storm (Maruts), the Dawn (Ushas) and the Sun (morning Sun called Savitar and noonday Sun called Surya) are very prominent. Among the objects of Nature the rivers have made an appeal to the imagination of the Vedic poets more than anything else. There is mention of the stars and the moon and also of the ocean and the mountains. But they play no real part in *Rigvedic* poetry as themes for the expression of "Beauty in Nature." The rivers are mentioned many times in the *Rigveda*. There is one entire song about the rivers (X-75). The floods of the rivers and the banks that were being eroded by the currents of the rivers are very often referred to in a casual way, which shows how strong an impression the rivers produced on the imagination of the Vedic poets.

The rivers Ganges and Jumna are mentioned by name. The Indus and its five tributaries to the east are also mentioned. Two of them, Vipat and Shutudri (Beas and Satlej), form characters in a dialogue with the sage Vishvamitra included in this book (previous chapter). There is the Kubha, which is identified with the Kabul river. Some tributaries of the Ganges further to the east are also mentioned. The westernmost river is in Central Asia. Thus the western half of the Gangetic plain and Afghanistan and the Central Asian regions to the north of Afghanistan must have been the active centres of culture in Vedic times. They say that the rivers have their start in the mountains and that they flow into the sea. We do not know whether this is only a sort of general conjecture or whether the Vedic people knew the actual sources and the actual mouths of the rivers. We do not know also whether they recognised the Jumna as a river that later joined the Ganges. They mention another river named Sarasvati. This is the

Haraquiti of the *Avesta*, and Haraquiti is a region on the earth, one of the sixteen regions of virtue which the great God, Ahura Mazda of the religion of Zarathushtra, had created. This is known as Arakosia to the Greeks. There is frequent mention of "Seven Rivers", the Sapta Sindhus, in the *Rigveda*. Various attempts have been made to identify the seven rivers with the river system in the Punjab area or in the North India area, including the Ganges and the Jumna. But all sorts of difficulties arise when the identification is proceeded with. Corresponding to the Sapta Sindhus, "The Seven Rivers" of the *Rigveda*, there is the Hapta Hindu, another of the sixteen regions created by Ahura Mazda. While all the rivers are phenomena of the world, Sarasvati is essentially a goddess, with the feature of being a river retained. My own view is that the Sapta Sindhus are not a phenomenon of the world and that they represent some super-worldly feature in the universe. I have also serious doubts whether the *Rigvedic* people knew of the river Sarasvati as an actual current of water; the probability is that they knew Sarasvati as a river only by tradition. It must have disappeared as a river even at that early time. They mention it as being to the west of the Ganges and the Jumna and to the east of Sutlej, enumerating Ganga, Yamuna and Sarasvati in this order (X-75-5). This is followed by the tributaries of the Indus, starting with the Satlej (Shutudri). Now it has been settled that the river ran southward and emptied itself into the Arabian Sea. But the traditional geography of India takes it as a river which joined the Ganges at the same place where the Jumna joins it, the three forming a single current. Among the rivers in the song about them, Sindhu occupies a very important place. The song starts with a description of that river.

"O waters, this poet is singing about the all-surpassing greatness of yours, sitting in the abode of the shining Fire. They have flown in three currents, seven and seven in each. This Sindhu is, in the matter of power, far above all the flowing rivers." (1)

The poet is called Sindhukshit, "one who lives on the banks of the river." He is sitting in front of the Altar, which is the abode of the shining Fire, and singing the song.

"For your sake, God Varuna has carved out a path to flow along. O Sindhu, you run towards the final stage in the race. You flow on the surface of the earth, along the valley, towards the slopes. Thereby you have attained lordliness over everything in the world, remaining in the highest position." (2)

"The noise produced on the surface of the earth go together to the celestial region; with its glow, it raises up infinite power. The rains make a sound as if it is from the clouds. This is the condition when the Sindhu moves on like a bull." (3)

"O Sindhu, like the mothers running towards their babies, the other rivers run towards you, like bellowing cows yielding milk, like a king going to the battlefield, you lead the two banks, when you reach the end of the sloping regions." (4)

It is true that there are places where the Sindhu is placed along with the gods like Mitra and Varuna, Aditi and the Heaven and the Earth (I-94-16, etc.)

Here there is a break; there are three verses in which the names of various rivers are mentioned. They are tributaries of the Sindu or rivers beyond the Sindhu system in Central Asia. In the fifth verse, the great rivers on the east of the Sindhu are enumerated, with Ganga and Yamuna (Ganges and Jumna) being the first to receive mention. Then the tributaries of the Sindhu on the eastern side are also given. In the sixth and seventh verses, the names of the rivers on the western side of the Sindhu are mentioned. Then again the river Sindhu is taken up in the eighth verse and also in the next and closing verse.

"Sindhu, where there are good horses, where there are good chariots, where there are good robes, where gold is available in plenty, beautifully shaped, prosperous in food, where there are rams, where there are herbs from which ropes are made, she remains happy prospering in honey." (8)

The word is "*Urna*", which I translated as "Ram". It is an animal from which wool is obtained. There is another word "*Silama*" which, according to Indian tradition, is a herb from which yarn is produced for making ropes. It may be like jute or somewhat like hemp. Gandhara is a

city in that region and there is mention of the sheep in that place with thick hair on the body from which wool is gathered (I-126-7). Here there is a glorification of the Sindhu as a warrior.

"The Sindhu yoked good horses to his chariot. With that chariot he was able to obtain victory in the battle. His great grandeur is being glorified here, one who is never defeated, possessing the fame which he won for himself, the majestic." (9)

The ancient indices give the song as addressed to the rivers in general and do not speak of it as a song on the Indus. But it is essentially a song in adoration of the river Sindhu, and the other rivers come into the picture only as associated with this river. It is true that there are some rivers that are independent of the Sindhu. But they are introduced here only as rivers in the region where the Sindhu is the mighty one. It is also true that in the list of the other rivers, the Sarasvati too is mentioned. Its site must have been known to the people. That river is mentioned in the place where it might have been flowing in ancient times. But the Sindhu is the real theme of this song, and six out of the nine verses are about this river. In the middle, there are three verses where the other rivers are mentioned.

It is a fact that there are places where the Sindhu is placed along with the gods like Mitra and Varuna, Aditi and the heaven and the earth. But there is no divine trait noticed in the actual description of Sindhu. It is just a mighty river. There are tributaries running into it, like mother-cows running towards their calves. When the river reaches the end of its course, it remains at the top, like a king leading an army to the battlefield. Here the banks are compared to the army. The main river remains the most important at the end even though a large number of rivers flow into it.

Among the rivers known to the people at that time, Sindhu, the Indus, must have been the most important. The word for a river is also the name of the river Sindhu, Indus. In a large number of places, the word "Sindhu" is used to designate a river in general and not as the name of a particular river. In the descriptions also, it is the Sindhu

that has been the object of admiration by the poets. In the case of the other rivers, there is just a mention of them. But in the case of the Sindhu, there is a detailed description in six verses in a song of nine verses about the various rivers.

Sarasvati is another river that has been described very prominently in the *Rigveda*. The river Sindhu is just mentioned in many places, and in the song about the rivers, there is a description of the river in a few verses. But in the case of the river Sarasvati, there are many songs in the *Rigveda*. No one can deny that the Sarasvati is the most important river in the *Rigveda*. But my fear is that the river was known to the people only in tradition, as a past memory of glory. If the banks of the Sarasvati had been the real centre of Vedic culture, as is indicated by the prominence given to that river in the *Rigveda*, then one may wonder why the river Sindhu, which is far away to the west, has come next in importance after the Sarasvati. Yamuna (Jumna) and Shutudri (Satlej) should have been given that importance being in the region nearest to the Sarasvati. If prominence in description is not a factor in deciding the relative importance of the regions, where the Vedic culture had been most strongly rooted, then Sarasvati cannot be accepted as the centre of Vedic culture just because of the prominence given to it in the descriptions. My own view is that prominence to the Sarasvati is due to its importance in tradition and that the prominence given to the Sindhu is due to the importance of the Sindhu region as the centre of culture at that time. Because the Sindhu was known to the people as a river, they sang about the river as a phenomenon of Nature. Because Sarasvati was known to the people only as a past memory and not as a fact of experience in their life, that river was described as a goddess also, its feature as a phenomenon of Nature being retained. There is only one whole song about Sarasvati. But there are many songs in which verses are addressed to this river while other verses are addressed to other divinities. Along with the Sarasvati, there is also the Sarasvan. The Sarasvati is in the feminine and the Sarasvan is in the masculine gender. The Sindhu is described as a man while the Sarasvati is generally

X. The Wedding

A wedding has always been an occasion for festivity and jubilation among practically all the nations of the world, both ancient and modern. Bharata says in his treatise on dramaturgy that a wedding the first visit of the bridegroom to his father's house after the wedding, the birth of a child, etc., are occasions for merriment when dances and other items of amusement take place (IV-269). The people in the Vedic times also considered a wedding as a very happy occasion. There is one song in the *Rigveda* about a wedding (X-85). Nothing is said about the actual ceremony. We are told something about the journey of the married couple to the home of the bridegroom. There are rich presents and there are attendants accompanying the bride. People assemble to have a look at the couple. Elderly persons bestow blessings on them. The wedding is that of Surya, the daughter of the Sun-god Savitar. (In the feminine, the last syllable in Surya is long and in the masculine, it is short.)

"There was *Raibhi* (a kind of Vedic song) to escort her as a lady companion. There was *Narashamsi* (another kind of Vedic song) as her attendant. The robes of Surya (the bride) were auspicious; the *Gatha* songs made her robes very bright." (6)

This is a divine wedding, and in connection with such a wedding, the divine bride should have Vedic songs as an accompaniment on her journey to her husband's home after the ceremony.

"Holy thoughts were her pillow. The sense-organ of the eyes became the eye-black as a decoration. The heaven and the earth became the treasure box. That is how Surya, the bride, went to her husband's home." (7)

"The songs called *Stomas* (adorations) became the cross-bar for her chariot. The metre became the comb as an ornament for the head. The two Ashvins (the Twin-

gods) were the bridegrooms. The Fire was the leader of the processions." (8)

The story of the chariot-race and the victory of the Ashvins in such a tournament and the acceptance of the Ashvins by Surya as her husbands is well known in the *Rigveda*, and is often mentioned in the songs about the Ashvins. In the description of the decorations of the bride, there is the term *Opasha*. Sayana, the ancient commentator, says that it is the seat in the chariot, and coming immediately after the meaning of the cross-bar in the chariot, this is rather natural. But the word means a "comb", and a comb is used as a decoration on the head to keep the hair in position. I take the word in its natural meaning and translate it as a comb, against Sayana. There is no difference of opinion regarding the other word, which means a cross-bar on the chariot. When the songs form the cross-bars, the metres should have some relation to them, and Sayana's explanation of *Opasha* as a seat satisfies this. But I cannot abandon the natural meaning of the word.

"Some coveted the hands of Surya. But the Twin-gods, the Ashvins, also became suitors. When Surya had indicated the wishes in her heart regarding her husband, the Sun-god gave her to them." (9)

"The mind became a cart for her to travel. The heaven became a roof above for the cart. There were two white oxen. That is how Surya went to her new home after the wedding." (10)

Sayana says that it was to Soma that the Sun-god gave his daughter in marriage. The text is not at all clear on the point. It simply says that the Sun-god gave her away. Sayana also says that two white luminaries, the Sun and the Moon, served as the oxen. This is quite appropriate in the context. But I have simply translated the passage as it stands without specifying the two oxen.

Here there is a change. Till now it was a simple narration of events. Now there are some greetings to the bride when she starts on her journey.

"Your two oxen, joined on to the *Rik* and the *Sama Veda* songs, go from here, both joined together. The ears are the wheels for you in the chariot. There is the path in the heaven easy to traverse." (11)

When the mind is the cart it is quite appropriate that the ears should be thought of as the two wheels. In the tenth verse it is said that there were two white oxen. Here they are specified as the *Rigveda* and the *Samaveda*. Sayana says that the two oxen are the Sun and the Moon. They are what are spoken of in the *Rigveda* and the *Samaveda*. The word in the text "*Abhihitau*" means "what are mentioned." The word can also mean "what are connected to." The two oxen are the two Vedas. That is certain.

"When you have to go away, the two wheels are quite clean. The life-breath is the axle that bears the burden. Surya, the bride, got into the cart which is made of the mind, when she was going away to her husband's home." (12)

Here the first half is in the second person and is addressed to her, while in the second half, there is a narration. I think that the words addressed to her are from her father, and then there is the direct mention of the fact that she got into the cart, in the second half.

"The wedding procession of the bride, Surya, started when the Sun-god ordered the party to move on. On the day of the constellation of *Magha*, the oxen are urged to go forward and on the day of the constellation of *Arjuni*, there is the reception in the home." (13)

There is no difficulty about the first half. I follow the interpretation of Sayana in the case of the second half. There is the word "*Hanyante*" which means "struck" or "killed". Some modern scholars take the word in this sense and translate the passage as "the cows are killed." The days are the days when the moon is in the two constellations; *Magha* is the tenth and the *Arjuni* is the pair of constellations that follow. The word is given in the dual. Now, they are considered as two constellations in which the moon is in conjunction, as the prior and the posterior. The latter is the right time for a wedding, as is given by Kalidasa in his *Kumarasambhava* about the wedding of Parvati, the heroine of that epic (VII-2). Here what is meant is the reception of the married couple in the home of the bridegroom. The root "*Han*" has the meaning of "to go". So the word "*Hanyante*" may also mean "are

made to go." The meaning may be that they are struck with the whip. The meaning of killing the cows has no relation to the context. After this there is a reference to the Twin-gods, the Ashvins, who wanted the hands of the daughter of the Sun-god. This is in a few verses and then there is again the direction of the Sun-god to his daughter to get into the vehicle that has been arranged for her.

"O Surya (feminine), ascend this vehicle made of *Kimshuka* and *Shalmali* trees having varied colours and forms, shining with a golden hue, rolling easily, having good wheels; go to the world of immortality, secure a happy married life for your husband." (20)

There are two verses after this which form an address to a demi-god named Vishvavasu. Perhaps he was one of the suitors, and the father is afraid of some trouble from his side when she makes her journey to her husband's home. He is asked to depart from the place since she is already married. Then there is a benediction to the daughter on her journey.

"Let the paths be free from thorns and straight, through which paths our companions have to travel to the house of the husband. Let the gods Aryaman and Bhaga escort us; may this union of the husband and the wife be for happiness, O gods." (23)

This is followed by an address to Indra, the warrior god, saying that he was discharging the daughter from his home and not from that home where she would be going and that he wanted her to be well tied on to the home. He wanted Indra to bless her in such a way that she would have a worthy son, when she reached the home of her husband. Then there is again a benediction addressed to the daughter.

"May whatever is covetable be available to you in plenty, having become the mother of a son. May you live full awake to enjoy undivided control over the house. Unite your body with your husband's. Then when you should become old, may both of you be able to address a learned assembly." (27)

The closing sentence is very significant. An occasion to address a learned assembly was considered to be the most covetable honour in those days. The poets were al-

lowed to sit before the Altar in a sacrifice and then recite the poem which they might have composed. Only very select persons were allowed to do this and when the poem so recited was accepted as the right type of poetry, then he was called a *Rishi* or Sage. Here in this context, it does not mean that the father was hoping that the daughter would become a poetess and recite such a poem sitting before the Altar in a sacrifice. It simply means that he hoped that she may be highly honoured in society just like a *Rishi* who was allowed to recite his poem and whose poem was accepted by the assembly. In the verse that immediately precedes this verse, there is a benediction that the god Pushan may escort her and that the Twin-gods, the Ashvins, may take her in their chariot and that she might secure the home under her control and that she might address a learned assembly. That was a benediction to the daughter and the present benediction is for both. This is followed by many prayers for the avoidance of dangers during the journey.

I am not sure whether all the benedictions are given by the father. Some are definitely by him. The likelihood is that the various elderly persons in the place who have assembled on the occasion, men and women, give such benedictions to the bride and the bridegroom when they depart from the house of the bride's father for the home of the husband. One address given to the bride by the people assembled there is of special interest.

"This lady has become married and has a happy husband. You all come here together and have a look at her. Bless her with the prayer for her happy married life and then you all may return to your homes." (33)

The benedictions continue. There is one more such benediction that has some significance.

"May he who has become her husband be endowed with the long life and may he live for a hundred years." (39b)

The usual length of life allotted to Man is a hundred years and there are frequent prayers in the *Rigveda* that one may live through that full span of life. There is yet another.

"May both of you remain even here and may you not

separate, living a happy life of revels with sons and grandsons and enjoying life even in this home." (43)

In another prayer there is the hope that the bride may give birth to a heroic son (44). There is another frequent prayer found in the *Rigveda*, namely, that one may be blessed with heroic sons (*Vira*). Not only this, there is a prayer that she may have ten sons, and let the husband be the eleventh male member in the family (45). Another prayer is also of great interest.

"May you be the empress in respect of your father-in-law. May you be the empress in respect of your mother-in-law. May you be an empress in respect of your sister-in-law (husband's sister). May you be the empress in respect of your brother-in-law (husband's brother)." (46)

In the *Rigveda* there is frequent mention of the daughter of the Sun-god having accepted the hands of the Twin-gods, the Ashvins, and in this song there is always the singular used in respect of the husband. Soma is supposed to be the husband here. During the mention of the Twin-gods as being the suitor when the start had been described and before the benedictions start, the gods are stated to have approved of his wishes; that is all that is said. It is not said that the daughter was given to them. I am, in this context, more interested in the wedding than in the bridegroom's identity. But this point has a special value when we look deeper into the significance of the song.

I find some sort of allegory in this poem. The Sun-god represents the highest wisdom in the *Rigveda*. The Ashvins, the Twin-gods, are the repositories of a secret wisdom called the Honey-wisdom (*Madhu Vidya*). I feel that the wedding represents the gift of the highest wisdom by the Sun-god to the Ashvins.

XI. The Temptation Repulsed

Love has been a very strong force in the life of the Vedic people; they never considered the man-woman relation as an evil to be avoided and they never condemned women as vehicles of sin and as sources of suffering and as a bar to the path of Man towards his goal. They never considered Man as the chief factor in the nation with women only as accessories. Men and women formed the nation and women were admitted into all professions and avocations including religion and war, which men followed. There was no restriction imposed on women in civic life. Love and heroism went together.

However, in the actual text of the *Rigveda* that we have now, love is only in the background and is seldom a direct theme in poetry. Practically the entire *Rigveda* is a collection of heroic poetry. We see valiant heroes with weapons engaged in battle against their enemies. It is only in the course of the description of the heroes that we see reflections of love as if it were from behind. There is a general background and in that background there is a very notable element of love also. From such reflections we know that love had been a very potent factor in the general life of the people.

There are, however, two poems in which love is the direct theme. In both of them we find the feelings of the heart of the one who is stricken with love when the longings of that loving heart are not satisfied. In one of them, Yami approaches Yama with solicitations of love, inviting him to have conjugal enjoyment with her; but Yama refuses to submit to her approaches (X-10). In the other Urvashi abandons her husband Pururavas, and the latter appeals to her to remain with him.

Yama is the brother and Yami is the sister. Yama must have been a king and in charge of maintaining the standards of moral life; he could not betray his own trust.

It was not any sentimental fear that prevented him from responding to the feelings of Yami; he had a sense of duty and he could not be false to what was placed under his charge. Such a union is against the accepted canons of pure life in society and he, as a king, has to see to it that no one violates the law; and he could not himself violate it.

Yami says: "I would eagerly draw to a solitary place, my companion for the sake of companionship. I will go to the vast ocean. The Creator has created a son of my own father on this earth who shines very resplendently."(1)

Yama replies: "Your companion does not desire this companionship. It will be a very clear thing to be marked and it will also be different from the normal in its form. The great and heroic sons of the powerful God who are the supporters of heaven are looking on with a wide view." (2)

Yami pleads: "This is only a lapse on the part of a single mortal, and that is approved by the gods. Place your heart in my heart. Let the body of the husband unite with the body of the wife." (3)

Yama continues his objection: "How can we do what we have never done on a prior occasion? We will be talking about the moral law and we will be doing what is contrary to that law at the same time. The demi-god of the Gandhrava clan in the water and the water-nymph are our origins. We are relatives too close for such a union." (4)

The Gandhravas are a kind of demi-gods and they reside in the waters; the nymphs of the waters are the celestial beings called the Apsaras. They were born of such an Apsara, and being brother and sister they shall not have such a union. They will be doing exactly the opposite of what they talk about.

But Yami has her own arguments: "The father made us the common masters of a home when we were in the womb. It has been done by the God Tvashtar and by the Sun-god with manifold forms. No one will be violating his ordinances. The earth and also the heaven know it as belonging to him." (5)

"Who will know this that has been done for the first

time on this day? Who will see this, who will talk about it? The abode of the gods Mitra and Varuna is very vast. Will you talk about this to the people, O unfaithful man?" (6)

Usually the dialogue is in the form of each verse being the words of the two persons alternatively. Therefore this verse must be the words of Yama. But the ancient tradition is that these are the words of Yami in continuation of the previous verse. However, modern scholars take them as the words of Yama, the order being that each verse contains the words of one or the other of the two persons in turn. The meaning seems to be more suitable as the words of Yami. I explain it in that way. Mitra and Varuna are the guardians of the Moral Law. Their domain is so very vast that one can hide oneself in some corner or other. The only way in which the secret could leak out would be if Yama himself revealed it to Man, and that would make him unfaithful to their mutual trust. She had already said that what they would be doing could not be against the divine ordinance, and even if what they would be doing went against any Law, they could keep their act secret without any one knowing about it, provided Yama would be faithful. She continues:

"A love for Yama has taken hold of me, so that we may lie down together on a common bed. I will surrender my body to you as a wife surrenders her body to her husband. Let us join ourselves to each other like the two wheels of a chariot." (7)

Yama gives the warning: "The spies of the gods who wander about here do not halt anywhere, they do not close their eyes. O you unfaithful one, you may go soon to some one other than myself. Join yourself with him like the wheels of a chariot." (8)

This is in reply to Yami's pleading that they could escape detection, in so far as the world is too vast for even the gods to discover them; they could hide themselves somewhere in a corner. Yama continues:

"By nights and by days, they will be casting their eyes on us. The eye of the Sun will again and again open. Yami will be bearing to Yama a relation that is unbecoming of family relatives, being a pair and belonging to a

common family, loving in the heaven and on the earth." (9)

This verse is given in ancient tradition as the words of Yama. That is against the order in which the verses are distributed between the two speakers in the dialogue; modern scholars follow this order and assign the verse to Yami. Here also I feel that that the meaning fits in better with the words of Yama than of Yami. I follow the tradition. Yama still continues:

"May be that some periods may come later on when such family relatives will do what is unbecoming of such family relatives. You may stretch out your arms towards another man, who will also be strong. I want you to desire some one other than myself as your husband." (10)

Now Yami takes up a new point in her argument. She drops the issue of Moral Laws and introduces some human element in support of her approaches.

"Is he a brother if the sister should be left without a lord? Is she a sister when the brother is left in grief? I talk so much because I am overcome with love. I request you to unite your body with my body." (11)

Yama replies: "I shall not unite my body with your body. If one should go to his own sister in this way, they call him a sinner. Secure all your joys along with some one other than myself. O fortunate one, your brother does not like this act." (12)

Now, Yami has still another argument. She says that perhaps Yama is in love with some other lady. She even taunts that he must be impotent.

"O Yama, what a pity it is; you seem to be impotent. I do not understand either your mind or your heart. Perhaps you want some one else to embrace you, tied round you like a strap on the body of the horse, like a creeper winding round a tree." (13)

Yama gives his final reply, refusing to submit to her solicitations:

"You will embrace some one else and some one else will embrace you, like a creeper winding round a tree, O Yami. May you long for his loving heart and may he too, in his turn, long for your loving heart. Then, create such a mutual understanding which will bring about great happiness." (14)

Some people may feel that the theme selected in this poem is a little unhappy. We do not know the poet who composed this song. It is a dialogue and in a dialogue, the ancient indices assign the verses to the speakers of each verse in the dialogue. Thus, Yama and Yami become the poets for the whole poem. But this is not correct; they are only the characters in the poem and not the poets. Perhaps it was meant for representation on the stage. The texts do not say who the speaker is for the verses. We know that only from tradition. That is why there is a difference of view between the ancient traditions and the modern interpretations regarding the person who speaks the sixth and the ninth verses. Apart from the tradition, we have to depend on the meaning.

This must have been an ancient theme and some poet must have composed it as a dialogue. We know that in Vedic times, they had music and costumes; there is also the dialogue. They had dance too. There is nothing improbable in the belief that this piece was exhibited on the stage by actors, perhaps accompanied by dance and music. The full force of the poem can be presented only through some kind of acting. The repetitions of the words of one character by the other character in the dialogue indicates that it was a stage device.

We must ignore the exact relationship of the two characters which precludes such union. We must simply regard them as a man refusing a union with a woman outside wedlock and a woman full of love for that man, forgetting and ignoring the restrictions on man-woman relations in that state of mad love. Then we can appreciate the pangs of love experienced by her and the stern attitude taken by the man in the matter of maintaining the rules of moral life. There are certain traditions and conventions accepted in moral life, and such traditions and conventions must be respected if there is to be orderly moral life. Man must not flout them because of personal cravings. We pity and also sympathise with the one and we honour the other. We do not despise one and we do not condemn the sternness in the other that verges on inhuman callousness. We like both. That is the secret of art; we love the two irreconcilable opposites. This is pos-

sible only in art; in the ordinary mundane world, we like the one and we dislike, as a consequence, what is opposed to it. This is one of the most artistic pieces of poetry that I have found in the *Rigveda.*

Here also there are similes. The union of the two is compared to the two wheels of a chariot connected together (7, 8). The embrace of a man and a woman is compared to the creeper winding round a tree (13, 14), and to the straps tied on a horse (13). There is jealousy, there is taunt, in the case of the woman. There is firmness in the man, resisting all temptations. The device of the same words and expressions repeated in different verses is also adopted in this piece, which gives an artistic touch to the language. Yami addresses Yama as a possible betrayer and Yama retorts by using the same words (6, 8). The words "companion" and "companionship" are found in the first two verses. In the similes about the wheels of a chariot and the creepers round a tree, the same words are repeated in the seventh and eighth verses and in the thirteenth and fourteenth verses. The request of Yami to connect his body with hers is rejected by Yama in the same words (11,12). Perhaps such repetition of words and expressions would express better and make a more effective impression, if the piece were represented on the stage by actors.

This is a real love poem. What would have fallen into the depths of vulgarity and repulsiveness has been lifted to the heights of artistic beauty. The theme does not determine the art in poetry; it is only the mode of handling which determines this. If a beautiful poem had been composed with a theme that is in itself charming, that would not have evoked such an admiration as a work of art. It is this conversion of what is possibly repulsive into a piece of beautiful art which makes it the work of a real artist.

XII. The Forsaken Lover

There are two love poems in the *Rigveda*. One is about Yama and Yami, and the other is about king Pururavas and the celestial damsel named Urvashi (X-95). Both continued in the traditions of the Epic age of a later time. The story of Yama and Yami is narrated in the *Brihanparadiya Purana*, one of the eighteen Epics of the Classical Age of Sanskrit. There it is said that Yama ascended to heaven as a result of his stern stand against the temptations of Yami. The story of Pururavas and Urvashi is found in the *Mahabharata*, since Pururavas is an ancestor of the heroes of that grand Epic. It is also the theme of the drama of Kalidasa named the *Vikramorvashiya*. The song in the *Rigveda* and the drama of Kalidasa have very close resemblances. It is likely that Kalidasa had his inspiration from the song of the *Rigveda*.

Urvashi had lived with Pururavas for some time but was on the point of abandoning him. At that stage Pururavas entreats her to stay on with him.

"O my dear wife, O unkind one, remain with me very willingly. We will mix each other's words in pleasant talk. If these words of ours remain unspoken now, you will not bear any love for me on a later day." (1)

Urvashi had determined to leave him and she says that such pleadings would be of no avail.

"Of what use will these words of yours be for me? I am going away, like the first dawn of the day. O Pururavas, I ask you to go back to your home. I have become like the wind which cannot be caught and stoppel." (2)

Pururavas tells her of the plight into which he has fallen on account of this impending separation.

"The arrows do not come out of the quiver to be discharged. I am not able to rush to the battle-field to win the cows, to win a hundred cows. I cannot shine in that religious ritual of the heroes, the battle, unless I can continue to be a valiant hero. The heroes should shout and

make a noise in battle, and in this state, no hero can make such a noise." (3)

Now Urvashi addresses the Dawn and talks about herself in the third person.

"This woman was carrying food and other articles to her father-in-law; and when she wanted she could go from that annexe house and reach her own home. There she enjoyed life, being given full conjugal happiness, day and night, with his virile limbs." (4)

This verse is the address of Urvashi only according to tradition, which I follow. According to some of the modern scholars, this is addressed by Pururavas to Urvashi, and Urvashi is identified with the Dawn. Some scholars do not accept it as genuine and reject it as an interpolation.

Urvashi continues and addresses Pururavas directly:

"You have given me full conjugal happiness three times a day with your virile limbs. And further, you have given me all desires in full without my having to wait for my turn. It is with great hopes that I came to your home, O Pururavas. Then you became the lord of my body, O great hero." (5)

There would be many queens and she did not have to wait for her turn among them to get what she wanted. She was treated with special consideration and she could freely get everything she wanted in full. The closing words suggest some occasion for complaint that she was not free and that Pururavas was lording over her too much. Perhaps Pururavas replies to her on this point.

"Sujurni, Shreni, Sumna-api, Hrade-chakshus, Granthini and Charanyu—attendants like these move about as if they were carrying ornaments and decorations for you; like cows that yield milk, they served you." (6)

The meaning is very uncertain. The various words seem to be proper names. Modern scholars consider them to be the words of Urvashi. I follow tradition. Now Urvashi admits the greatness of Pururavas.

"When he (Pururavas) was born, the divine ladies remained near by. It is the rivers which flow by themselves that had brought him up. The gods nourished you, O Pururavas, for the sake of their great battle, for the des-

truction of the enemies (Dasyus)." (7)

In the third verse Pururavas had spoken of his plight, how he was unable to take part in battles and here, perhaps, Urvashi is referring to this, implying thereby that he should pay attention to his mission instead of complaining about his pitiable condition through separation from herself. Then Pururavas explains his own position.

"When I, a human being, lived among those superhuman beings who had been casting away their robes, they were all frightened of me and ran away from me like a terrified snake (feminine), like mares yoked to a chariot." (8)

"When I, a mortal man, lived close to them, the immortal nymphs, talking as freely as with free will, they made their bodies to shine like some water-birds, like horses when they play or when they eat grass." (9)

"Falling down like lightning, she shone, bringing me all that I desired, from the regions of water. You gave birth to a son from the waters, high-born and heroic. O Urvashi, may you pass through the long span of life." (10)

Here Pururavas is describing the happy and free life of enjoyment and contentment that he was able to lead among the divine damsels and how a worthy son was born through Urvashi. He wanted her to remain in the same position and enjoy life longer in his company.

In Kalidasa's drama there is an incident according to which Pururavas looked at a celestial damsel and that this was the reason why Urvashi was annoyed and wished to leave Pururavas. This incident is noticed in the three verses (8 to 10). There was a sudden flash of lightning and that revealed the form of the damsel to Pururavas.

Urvashi continues to explain her own position. She has some complaint against him, which she now reveals.

"You were born for the sake of giving protection on the earth. O Pururavas, you have placed some life-force in me in the form of a son. I knew the consequences and even that night I had given you the warning. You did not listen to me. Why do you talk like this when you are not able to continue your enjoyments?" (11)

There had been an understanding that Urvashi would remain with him only till a son should be born. She had

warned about the birth of the son, but Pururavas did not listen to her and he insisted on the enjoyment which resulted in her becoming pregnant. So, according to the understanding, she has to leave him, and there is no meaning in talking like that, entreating her to stay on, which she cannot do. It may be noted that this was the condition for Urvashi to remain in the company of Pururavas in the drama of Kalidasa, that she should return to heaven when he saw the face of a son.

"When will the son, born of the father, be not eager to be with the father? When will he not shed tears at the time he is able to recognise me, with sobs? Who will be able to disunite the husband and the wife, the joint masters of a home, when they have a common heart, so long as the fire burns in the home of the father-in-law and of the mother-in-law?" (12)

Pururavas is asking Urvashi to stay with him at least on account of the son who will long to be with the father when he is born, and when he knows about the father and when he is not able to meet him he is sure to shed tears and sob. Further, if they are united in their hearts then no one can separate them, in spite of the understanding, so long as the wedding fire burns in their home. He asks her to ignore that understanding and remain with him.

Urvashi puts her own case before Pururavas: "I knew what reply I should give. It is certain that he may shed tears. There will be a sob; but there may not be a wailing. There will be an auspicious event. That son whom you have placed in me, I will send over to you. You may go away to your home. You were thoughtless and you cannot get me back again." (13)

She says that she will have to reveal the facts to the son, when he would be born and when he would be able to understand things and when, as a result, he knows about his father. There may be tears and there may be even a sob. But she will not create an occasion for him to wail. There will be that auspicious occasion of the birth of the son and then he would be sent over to Pururavas.

When Pururavas finds that his pleadings are of no avail, he takes up a new line of approach to Urvashi, re-

vealing certain thoughts in his mind, which he thinks, might change her mind.

"I have enjoyed life in that happy way and I will drop myself down, never more to return, so that I reach the farthest distance to which a mortal can go. Thereafter I will lie in the lap of Death. Then, after that, the wolves might eat up the body, coming in haste." (14)

I think that the fourth Act in the drama of Kalidasa where the hero is in a state of lunacy, is based on this hint in the *Rigveda* that the hero was determined to die if Urvashi would not return to the hero. She again tells Pururavas that he should realise the truth of the situation and that he should not be thoughtless again.

"O Pururavas, do not die, do not drop yourself down. Let not the unholy wolves eat you up. There is indeed no companionship in women. Their companionships are like the hearts of some ferocious animals, the wolves." (15)

This confession of Urvashi is something wonderful. She admits that there is no love and no lasting companionship in women. Their company will only bring ruin to Man. So he need not think of any kindness from her.

"When in an inappropriate manner I had conducted myself and when I had lived for four autumns among mortal men, I simply ate a drop of butter once during daytime. I was conducting myself in full satisfaction even with that much." (16)

It is not proper that an immortal, a celestial damsel, should live among mortals and Urvashi had done that . I think that the dialogue closes with this. But according to the ancient indices, the next verse is the address of Pururavas, and the last verse is in the words of Urvashi. I feel that the following two verses are by the poet who composed the song in the form of a dialogue.

"I make this appeal to Urvashi, I a member of the Vasishtha family; she fills the whole of the atmospheric region and she measures out the entire space. May the gifts of good deeds remain by your side. May you return. My heart burns." (17)

The second sentence appears to be by Pururavas, when he entreats her to return. But in the first half, there is the mention of a member of the Vasishtha family as the

speaker and he might be the poet. The traditional interpretation is to take the word Vasishtha in its natural meaning and not as the name of a person.

"O Pururavas, the son of Ila, thus say those gods to you, that you have become a friend of Death. Your descendents will offer oblations to the gods. You will be able to enjoy life in heaven." (18)

My own reading is that the last two verses are by the poet who composed the song. First he addressed some words, in the form of the previous verse, to Urvashi, when she finally refused to return to Pururavas. Now, if Pururavas is to die of grief, then the poet says that his progeny will worship the gods and that he would be able to enjoy a happy life in heaven. "To become a friend of Death" means "to die". He need not hope that Urvashi would return to him and that he would be able to enjoy life on earth in her company, as before. The implication seems to be that he should try to find happiness on earth even without her. But if he cannot do so, then Death will be a friend to him in so far as he would be able to have full enjoyment in heaven.

Urvashi confessed that the hearts of women are like wolves. I think that Kalidasa wanted to illustrate this in his drama with the same theme. In the latter, Pururavas lost the woman whom he got from heaven and he later had the same woman in Nature on the earth. With that woman whom he secured in Nature on the earth he was able to have eternal joy. Urvashi speaks about the contrast between the mortals and the immortals, that they cannot mix together. So when she says something about the hearts of women, it must be in reference to the celestial women. Blood is thicker than water. A mortal man on earth and an immortal woman in heaven cannot become husband and wife with a common home on earth. What is contained in the concluding verse is what the gods have to say; it is not the philosophy of life which the poet wanted to convey. The gods said that if Pururavas were to die through grief arising out of separation from Urvashi, he should not be despondent; he can find happiness in heaven after death and his duties would be performed by his progeny. The gods sympathised with him in his plight.

I read in this closing verse an implication that, according to the poet himself, it is better to forget her and live in happiness on earth.

Here are two poems in which the element of love is dealt with directly. In one we see the pangs in the heart of a despondent woman in her love for a man, and in the other, we see the pangs in the heart of a man despondent about the loss of the company of a woman whom he loves and with whom he has been enjoying life. In both there is the philosophy that men and women should join according to certain rules, obeying all the restrictions which society has imposed on the life of Man, handling down such restrictions in the form of traditions and conventions. The relation of wedlock shall not be indiscriminate; it shall fall outside certain family relationships. Similarly a mortal man on earth should join himself only with a mortal woman on the earth.

In neither of the poems is there even the faintest hint that the man-woman relation or love or enjoyment in mutual company by men and women is in itself a sin and a source of suffering. The sin is when certain rules are violated, when certain traditional beliefs and conventions are disregarded through animal passion, through mere carnal craving. What is wanted is neither suppression nor repression, but control and proper regulation.

We do not know who the poet was. We note the name of Vasishtha in the last verse but one. This may be a reference to a member of the Vasishtha family; he may be Vasishtha himself. The poem must have been composed for presentation on the stage. There is plenty of scope for dance and music with a celestial damsel in the scene. The effect is more in such dance and music and not so much in the recitation as in the case of the Yama-Yami song. So we do not find here the same devices in the manipulation of the language as in the other poem. We do not also find the same prominence given to similes in this.

XIII. The Worship of Weapons

The Vedic people formed a nation of warriors. I have not found any evidence in the Vedas that they came from a foreign land as invaders and conquered the original inhabitants of the country, exterminating them, destroying their culture, driving them into wilderness or retaining them as slaves. No scholar has shown any such evidence from within the text of the *Rigveda;* the theory of an Aryan invasion of India is based on external evidence. One thing is certain and that is that after the Vedic period, the people never invaded a foreign country; they were also not the victims of invasion by a foreign nation for a long time. Regarding the Vedic period too, no scholar has produced a single set of evidence to show that foreigners had been harassing the people of India at that time. They all speak about the internal feuds among the rulers of the small states into which the Vedic region is supposed to have been divided. Freedom from foreign invasion and abstention from invading another country are features in the national life of the Vedic people of which they could well be proud, a feature in the life of an ancient nation which is not seen anywhere else. This is due to the heroism of the people, a heroism the like of which is not seen outside of the Vedic people. Heroism in one form or other is a quality found in all the other nations and we hear about the great empires founded in the regions to the west of the land of the Vedic people. But such empires were the products of invasion and conquest and were in their turn subject to invasion by enemies and defeat at their hands. After the people had settled down in the country and started the Vedic civilization, they had only amalgamated other peoples and other cultures into their own nationhood and their own culture, to form a greater nation and a greater civilization; the people in the south of India and the Vedic people joined together into a single nation with one religion and a common culture. Though

the Vedic people established themselves as a nation with a culture of their own without a conquest, it does not mean that they did not wear arms or use arms. They remained free and they let others retain their freedom on account of the arms which they themselves wore. The people abstained only from the wrong use of the weapons and not from the use of the weapons as an abstract principle. They used their weapons for right purposes, for the preservation of freedom and peace. They worshipped their weapons as much as they worshipped the various gods who gave them help in their wars against those who tried to endanger their national life. Enemies, war against the enemies and victories over the enemies, appear in the text of the *Rigveda* as often as any other important fact. If wicked people create danger to human happiness, only weapons can save humanity from such danger; if people are good, weapons in their hands are never a danger to human happiness. This seems to have been their philosophy. There is one whole song of nineteen verses in the form of an adoration of articles of war (VI-75). It is by a Sage named Payu who belongs to the family of Bharadvaja.

"When a soldier wearing arms goes to the field of battle, his appearance is like that of a water-cloud. May you obtain victory with your body remaining free from any injury. May the greatness of the armour render you protection." (1)

"With bow, may we win cows, may we win a victory in battle with a bow. May we win a victory in the terrific battle with a bow. The bow-string destroys the desires of the enemy. With a bow may we conquer the regions in all directions." (2)

"This bow-string, competent for its task in battle, comes near to the ears as if it were a lady who wanted to say something confidential, as if it were a lady who desires to embrace her dear lover. When it is tied on to the bow, it produces a sweet sound like a young lady." (3)

"The two ends of the bow, behaving like a loving young lady joining her bridegroom, like a mother supporting her son on her lap, may the two ends working together discharge the arrows on the enemy, putting the enemies to route." (4)

When the string is tied on to the bow and when the bow is bent, the two ends of the bow coming together are compared to a bride joining the bridegroom or to a mother holding her son on her lap. It is this position of the bow with the two ends joining together, that enables the arrow to fly and hit and destroy the enemy.

"The quiver in which the arrows are kept is the father of many daughters, and his sons are innumerable. There is noise created when they reach the battle-field. The quiver, tied on to the back, wins all the battles and all the frays when the arrows leave." (5)

"The trained chariot-driver, sitting in the chariot, drives the horse forward wherever the warrior wants to go. I ask you all to sing in praise of the reins. The reins direct the horses according to the wishes in the mind." (6)

"The horses with strong hoofs, make a terrific sound when they rush forward yoked to the chariot. They crush down the enemies with their hoofs by attacking them. They destroy the foes without ever retreating from the field." (7)

"That chariot, his vehicle, deserves to be designated the oblation to the gods, where his bow and his armour are kept. We take our seats always in that strong chariot, bearing a heart full of happiness and confidence." (8)

"Our forefathers loved to gather together in such chariots; they brought us rich food, facing all precarious conditions with courage, full of valour and power, grand and majestic. They had a variety in their army, they were strong in their weapons; they were incapable of being defeated. They were tried warriors, they were immense, and they could defeat any army." (9)

"There were our ancient forefathers who were great poets, and they were worthy of *Soma* offered to them. The Heaven and the Earth are propitious to us, incomparable. May the god Pushan protect us from sins, whoever works to make the Law of Moral Life to prosper. Protect us in such a way that no one with a wicked heart will ever dominate our life." (10)

"May the arrows grant us success and happiness there where the heroic warriors rush about here and there, coming together and parting from one another. They have

feathers as their clothes and their teeth are wild animals. They are covered with the skin of cows and they fly off when they are discharged from the bow." (11)

"O fast flying arrow make us strong all round. Make our body as hard as a rock. May Soma speak highly of us. May Aditi grant us prosperity." (12)

"They hit against their sides; they hit against their hips. O the horse-whip, spur up the horses in the battle, knowing your duty well." (13)

"Like a serpent with hood, it winds round the arm resisting all round the missiles darted from the string of the enemy's bow. The hand-gloves, knowing all the vulnerable points, may it protect me as a man protects another man, from all sides." (14)

"Smeared with poison, with a head made of the horns of an antelope, with a point made of iron, this arrow is the virility of the god Parjanya. To that divine arrow, there is this great salutation." (15)

"When you are discharged from the bow, fly far off, O arrow, that has been sharpened with sacred chants. Go forth and fall on the enemies. Let no one remain alive among them." (16)

"Where the arrows fall in clusters, like young boys with their hair let loose, there, may Brahmanas pati and Aditi grant us victory; may they grant us victory at all times." (17)

"I am covering your vital spots in the body with armour. May the king Soma cover you up once again with immortality. May Varuna create for you a region wider than the widest. When you win victory, may the gods congratulate you." (18)

"One may be our own, one may be far removed from us or one may be a stranger to us. If such a one thinks of killing us, may all the gods destroy him. My adoration is the inner armour." (19)

Here is a song about all the weapons, both offensive and defensive, with chariots and horses and chariot-drivers and the field of battle coming into the picture. There are four verses about the arrows. But after the first two (11 and 12) there is a description of the goad and the hand-gloves. Then the description of the arrows continues. I

do not know why the description of the goad and the hand-gloves is placed between the description of the arrows.

In describing the bow-string in the third verse, it is compared to a young lady who desires to say something confidential to her lover, who embraces him. In the fourth verse, the two ends of the bow are described. When the bow is bent the two ends come together and this is compared to a bride and bridegroom coming together at the wedding. It may also be their meeting at the festivals where young people meet and arrange their union in wedlock. The meeting of the two ends of a bow, when it is bent to discharge the arrow, is also compared to a mother holding her son on her lap. This represents a fact in the genius of the people. To them the spirit of heroism is always joined together with the element of love. Heroism ennobles love which otherwise might descend to the commonplace. Love makes heroism human, for without this element of love, heroism may become dry and hard. It is the union of the two that makes a situation happy and enjoyable. This is what we find also in later poetry in Sanskrit literature. Kalidasa connects them together and so does Bharavi in his grand Epic called the *Kiratarjuniya*. This latter is an idyll of martial heroism and in various contexts, he introduces an element of love by way of similes when the situation is one of martial valour. Although love does not come to the fore-front in the poetry of the *Rigveda*, there is this frequent reference to love when heroism is the main theme. When in a few cases, there is a love element as the principal factor in a situation, there is also the touch of heroism added to it. There are the two poems where love is the most prominent feature, that of Yama and Yami and that of Pururavas and Urvashi. In both of them, an element of heroism and seriousness is quite noticeable.

Another feature that is to be taken note of in this song is the importance attached to song. With the songs of adoration there are also their rituals of worship in which the offering of *Soma* plays a very important part. Thus it is said in the eighth verse that the chariot deserves the designation of an oblation. The forefathers were poets and they were worthy of *Soma* (10). The arrow has been

sharpened through songs of adoration (16). After all, the weapons have been mentioned both for offence and for defence. It is said at the end of the poem that the real weapon of defence, which is the inner one, is the song of adoration.

The *Rigvedic* poets never make a plain prosaic statement. To them there was always an element of excellence in poetic language, and this excellence was produced in most cases through some simile. A simile is a comparison of the object in the context with some object of superior quality. The hand-gloves are compared to a serpent winding round the hand. The arrows are compared to boys with their hair let loose. When a man has worn armour, he looks like a water-cloud. There is the reference to the sound produced by the horses when they kick the ground with their hoofs (7).

The Vedic people used poisoned arrows; the tips of the arrows were made of the horns of antelopes and there was an iron point at the head (15). The salutation offered to the arrow is specially significant. To them the arrows are as much objects of worship as the gods themselves. Various gods are brought together as associated with the implements of war described here and they are the Heaven and Earth, Pushan (10), Aditi, Soma (12), Brahmanas pati, Aditi (17), Soma, Varuna (18) and the gods (19). Human effort and divine grace go together for success in battle.

XIV. The Woes of Gambling

Generally we get the impression of very happy homes when we read the *Rigveda*. The father and the mother love each other and they have sons and daughters and they are also properly married. They have sons worthy of the father in the matter of heroism and learning. These two factors are very prominently mentioned in the *Rigveda*. There is also plenty in the house. The people follow their trades and they prosper in life. They had their amusements, sports and games.

But sometimes someone falls into misfortune through his own carelessness. People drink and there is mention of the intoxication caused by drinking. They had their sports in the form of chariot-racing; this only the rich people could participate in, though all could enjoy the sports as spectators. Tournaments were held for such games. Then the ordinary man had his gambling. It is here that, perhaps, men come to sorrow. They lose the stakes.

There is a song in which a man who has lost everything in gambling wails over his fate, how his happy home was broken up and how he became the target of insult from his own wife and his relatives. In the end he decides to give up this game and to take to agriculture and thus restore his happiness at home. The poem is full of pathos (X-34).

"The dice which originally grew up on a big tree in the plains, swinging in the high winds, took hold of me with mad enthusiasm. This dice gave me such exhilaration which the drinking of the *Soma* grown in the Munjavan mountain alone can create in me. It always kept awake in my heart." (1)

The dice which they used for gambling were made of the stones within the nuts that grew on a certain tree. The poet of the above verse was thinking of the early days when he was attracted by the dice and how happy he felt

in the beginning about the game.

"This lady has never shown any anger towards me; she never gave me any occasion for grief. She was always good towards me and my companions. On account of the dice to which I was completely devoted without another thought, I began to abandon this lady who was attached to me." (2)

"Now my mother-in-law hates me when I go to her. My wife stands in my way everywhere. I may ask any one and I am not able to get any one who will help me with money if I make a request. As in the case of an aged horse that fetched a high price in the beginning, I am not able now to earn the enjoyments which as a gambler I could win formerly." (3)

The reference here is to the horse that takes part in chariot-races. In the beginning it used to win prizes and so fetched a high price at sales.

"There was a time when the dice used to be jealous of my wealth when I used to wager with that dice at the gambling places. Now the wife of the same person has become the target of insult by others. My father and my mother and my brothers say about me, 'We do not know him; you may take him away, this aged fellow.' " (4)

"If I think of never more playing with the dice, I become abandoned by the companions who will go away from me. When the dice is dropped on the floor in the gambling place, it makes a sound as if it is inviting me, this brown-coloured dice. I again go there like a woman going to her man friend." (5)

"I go to the gambling assembly when I am challenged, with my body glowing with enthusiasm, feeling that I will be able to win. The dice increases my ardour for gambling, taking up what the opposing gambler puts down as stake." (6)

"This dice seems to have a goad and a catch, a hatchet, burning flames, instruments of torture. It seems to endow the winning opponent with many a happy son. It seems to have been smeared with honey for him, to bring him much prosperity." (7)

"It plays on the floor of the gambling place as a group of fifty-three, like the Sun-god of truthful conduct. It

never bows down even before the wrath of a strong man. Even the king performs a salutation to it with his head bent down." (8)

"It remains below on the ground and yet it seems to shine far above. It has no hands and yet it is able to catch hold of others who can use their hands. It is thrown on the gambling floor and it seems to be heavenly. It is cold and yet it burns the heart." (9)

"My wife, when I have become such a gambler, suffers grief when she is thus abandoned; so is the mother, since I have to wander about here and there. I am in debt and in fear I seek for wealth. I have to go to the house of others at night." (10)

"When I look at my wife, the dice creates grief in me, also when I see the wives of others with their homes kept in good condition. In the forenoon I am able to yoke the brown horses to a chariot, and when the lights have to be put on, I have to lie down like a wandering servant." (11)

"He who had been the leader of your army with your immense hosts, he who had been the foremost king for the group, to that dice I hand over everything; I hold back no wealth from him. I open all the fingers. This is the truth that I say." (12)

Till now there has been a description of the pitiable condition of one addicted to gambling. Now the whole situation changes and there is advice given to the people at large.

"Gamble not with the dice. Engage yourself in carrying on the cultivation of the fields. Then you can revel in wealth, enjoying high honour from everybody. O gambler, the cows are there, the wife is there. It is this that the noble Sun-god has to teach me." (13)

Now there is also an address to the dice. He is taking leave of them. Till then the dice was supposed to have been his friend, but at the same time it brought ruin on him.

"Make friends with me. Be kind to us. Do not come against us in a frightful way, with terrible looks. Let your anger remain at rest, which has been an enemy. Let it be someone else who will come within the bondage of the brown dice." (14)

I have not at all given a literal translation. I have, rather, given only the general meaning. In the text there is a shift from the first person to the third person from the sixth to the eleventh verse. The fourth verse also is in the third person. In the beginning the gambler refers to himself in the first person and then changes over to the third person as "he" and as "the gambler". But I have right through given the translation in the first person. There is no doubt that he is speaking about his own fate. He is not talking about the condition of gamblers in general. It may be that there is also a hint about such a general condition in store for all gamblers. But in the context, the primary reference is to himself and to his misfortune.

The attractions of gambling, his inability to keep away when he hears the sound of the dice falling on the ground and rolling there, his losses, the power of the dice that do not bend their heads before any one and before whom even kings bend their heads—all these factors make the song very interesting. The contrast between his own condition and the condition in the happy homes of others, the change that came over him from being a rich man with chariots to the condition of a beggar who had to find refuge in the homes of others, the way in which he opens his hands showing his utter poverty—these are all very touching. Then comes the happy decision to change his ways and there is the address to the dice in the end. The last sentence need not be taken to be a curse on others that they, and not himself, be the victim of the dice. The emphasis is on his own freedom. If others do not change their ways, it is their fault and he can do nothing for them.

XV. The World

The *Rigvedic* people were realists. They saw the world as a flat, extensive region and they called it the *Prithivi*, "what is expanded." Above them they saw the shining region and they called it the celestial region, *Dyaus*, "what shines." They thought of the two as a pair and considered them as a unity called *Dyava-prithivi*, "heaven and earth." The heaven is the father and the earth is the mother. The name for the heaven is in the masculine gender and the name for the earth is in the feminine gender. They also thought of the vault of heaven as a vessel placed on the earth with its mouth downwards. The lower portion is thought of as another vessel with its mouth upwards called *Uttanapada*, "what has the legs stretched upwards." In this position, the back part will be directed downwards. In between the two, there is the intermediate region, and they designated it the *Antariksha*, "what abides between the two."

Men live on this earth. The great gods are mostly in the highest region and there are others who are in the intermediate region. Practically no god abides in the earthly region. Only the Fire is a real terrestrial divinity. Of course there are the rivers and the waters. There is also Brihaspati who is a divinity on the earth. Gods who are related to certain phenomena of Nature in the intermediate region are placed in that region. They are Indra who is connected with the phenomenon of the water clouds and the downpour of rain when they are smitten, and the Maruts who are the storms. Rudra, the father of the Maruts, is also in that region, and so are other divinities who are related to the rain and to the air, like Parjanya (god of rain) and Vayu, the air. All other gods who are related to light, are in the highest region. The Twin-gods called the Ashvins, the Dawn, Surya and Savitar who are Sun-gods, Vishnu, Mitra and Varuna, are all in the celes-

tial region. It is very difficult to associate them with any phenomena of Nature. The poets had a vision of some powers behind the visible facts of the world and they called them by the name of gods, *Devas*, "what shine." There are many places where the three worlds are implied. The names for the three worlds appear separately throughout the *Rigveda*.

"O Ashvins, come hither from thence, where you two move about in the intermediate region, or in the two worlds (heaven and earth), when you sit on the chariot with your powers." (VIII-10-6)

Here the intermediate region is mentioned separately and the heaven and the earth are joined together. They are known by the term *Rodasi* in the dual number. This term always means the heaven and the earth. But the other terms mean a specific region or region in general. There is the term *Rajas*, which means only a region in general, though there are many places where it means the intermediate region. The words for the earth mean either what is expanded or extensive or what is an abode. Sometimes the earth is indicated by "this" in contrast to the heaven indicated as "that". Vishnu traversed the three worlds with his three strides. There is mention of "finding up these six regions" (I-164-6). There is also mention of "three heavens" (I-35-6). In such cases the word means a region in general and not a specific region called the heaven.

There is frequent mention of the four points of the compass or directions. The Ashvins are invoked "to come to the place of worship from the west, from the east, from the south and from the north" (VII-72-5). There is mention of "the four directions of the earth" (X-19-8). "The earth has four corners" (X-50-2). The five directions are spoken as belonging to Soma (IX-86-29). There is also mention of "seven directions" (IX-114-3). The heavenly region is also called *Vyoman*, perhaps "what is woven." It is also called *Rochana*, "what shines." *Naka* and *Vishtapa* are other terms. The original meaning is not at all clear. To explain it as *Na* (not) *A* (other than) *Ka* (happiness) is only a fanciful one. *Vishtapa* may be "what is fixed." The adjective *Parama*, "highest", is often used

along with words denoting heaven.

The heaven and the earth are spoken of as two vessels (III-55-20). The earth is itself spoken of as a wheel along with the heaven as another wheel, joined together with an axle.

"Indra, on account of his powers, fixed the earth and the heaven like two wheels joined together with an axle" (X-89-4).

But there is practically no personification of the intermediate region. Though in many a case the word *Rajas* means this region, the word also means space or region in general. The word that is usually accepted is *Antariksha*, "what abides between two things," namely, between heaven and earth. Sometimes the two regions out of the three are spoken of as belonging to the Sun-god, Savitar, the third belonging to Yama (I-35-6). But the region of Yama is not the earthly region. It is in the higher region of light. Elsewhere it is said that the highest region is known to Vishnu while the two are known to us, to men (VII-99-1). We do not know of a region below the earth. There is nothing like a nether world. The fourteen regions, one above the other, with the earth and six others above and seven below the earth, came into Indian Cosmology only at a much later time. The notion of three worlds with the earth in the middle and with heaven above and hell (called the *Patala*) below, is also a later one. In the *Rigveda* we have only the earth and the two worlds above, the intermediate and the celestial regions. There is no hell in the *Rigveda*.

The earth, the intermediate region and the celestial region form a spatial gradation in the universe. But perhaps this has also a subtler meaning, the three being gradations of fineness in the universe. The earth is the grossest, the finer gradation coming after that as the intermediate and the finest coming last as the celestial region. Here it must be noticed that the intermediate region has water as its essence and the celestial region has light as its essence. These three, the grossest matter, the water, which is finer, and Fire or Light which is still finer, form the first three of the five elements of the universe in later philosophy, what are called the *Panchabhootas* or the Five Ele-

ments. The remaining two are the Air and the Ether, *Vayu* and *Akasha*. There is a *Vayu* in the *Rigveda*. But it is not a region within the gradation of the Earth, the watery region in the middle and the region of Light or Fire in the top. Vayu is a god in the intermediate region. There is nothing corresponding to the Ether found in the *Rigveda*. Vayu, the god of the intermediate region, has touch or impact, a force, as its essence. In the case of Ether, sound is its essence. There is mention of some highest truth from which sound or language came. This sound or language is called *Vak* or speech.

"O Brihaspati, the highest source of *Vak* (Speech), which they set in motion holding the name in their hands." (X-71-1)

Here it is specifically stated that *Vak* came from some original source. The "name" is the finest form of sound. There is frequent mention of the concealed names. This is a significant sound which is not yet manifest to Man. Thus, if we look into the *Rigveda* closely, it will be found that the concept of the Five Elements, the *Panchabhootas*, is traceable to *Rigvedic* thought itself. There is some riddle involved in the use of the various numbers from one to twelve. Then there are various other numbers mentioned frequently in the *Rigveda*. *Shatam* (hundred) and *Sahasram* (thousand) may have their specific meanings; but they are used in many places as signifying infinity. But that cannot be the case with the number ninety-nine. They speak of the ninety-nine forts of the demons which Indra burst asunder. Thirty-three is another important number. In this scheme of mysterious numbers, we have also the number five coming into the picture. But I have not come across any mention of the five gradations in the scheme of the world, which is spoken of as three. But the source of the Five Elements, the *Panchbhootas*, is worth pursuing, and it is not impossible that the *Rigveda* contains the original seeds of this thought.

It has not been said anywhere in the *Rigveda* that there was a creation of the world, the bringing into being of what was not existing, by some Superior Power. The various gods are related to the formation of the world. But not one of them "created" the world. They gave the

world a form and a position. There is also the Law functioning in the world and that Law is also an inherent factor in the real world. Thus there is no creator either for the world or for the Law in the world, and this Law consists of the Moral Law and the Physical Law. Both are natural Laws in the world.

Various gods have measured out the world. He, the intelligent god, measured the six regions of the world (VI-47-3). Indra is the one who has created the extent, the size of the earth (VI-47-4). Vishnu is often spoken of as having measured the three worlds, and this is the characteristic feature of Vishnu. Sitting in the intermediate region, Varuna measured out the earth with the Sun, with a measuring rod (V-85-5). "They measured out the earth with a measuring rod" (III-38-3).

There is mention of the spreading out the earth, fixing the earth. Various gods are associated with this. Indra spread out the surface of the earth and fixed the highest region of the heavens (I-62-5). The Fire supported the earth and fixed the heaven (I-67-3). Brihaspati with his power fixed the end of the earth (IV-50-1). Vishnu fixed the heaven (VII-99-4). In this way it is found that the gods fixed the world in its proper form and in the proper position.

Indra, taking hold of the earth, spread it out (II-15-2). Varuna spread out the stars and the earth (VII-86-1). Indra with his might spread out the heaven and the earth (VIII-3-6). Indra spread out the extensive surface of the heaven (I-55-1). The Maruts spread out the earthly abode long and wide (V-87-7). Here the earth and the heaven and the entire regions of the world were spread out by the various gods.

Thus we find three processes in the formation of the world. There is measurement, there is spreading, and there is fixing. These must have reference to the construction of a house by an architect. The Vedic people must have had immense houses to live in. It is impossible that they were living in small mud cottages if they had such ideas about building a house. It is said that Varuna had a house with a thousand doors (VII-88-5), and Mitra and Varuna lived in a council chamber with a thousand pillars

(II-41-5). Various aspects of house construction are indicated in the process of giving a form and a fixed location to the world by the gods. Indra fixed the massive heaven in a space without a raft (II-15-2). There is reference to a door. The door of the heaven is mentioned in I-56-5, 113-14 and III-46-6. The word used is *Ata*, which must have been a technical term in architecture. There is also the regular word *Dura* for a door. Vishnu fixed the earth with nails (VII-99-3). The Sun-god fixed the earth with some mechanical devices (X-149-1). Perhaps the idea is in reference to some kind of foundation for locating the house.

The name of *Tvashtar* (Architect) itself shows the advanced stage which the science and art of house construction had reached at that time. They must have been using timber for the construction of their houses. Then, there is also Vishvakarman, the Maker of All. He too is an architect who had constructed the world as a house. Tvashtar is more a fashioner of articles than a builder of houses.

"What was the support on which Vishvakarman sat? What was the start of the construction and how was it? Vishvakarman, creating the world, fixed the heaven, seeing everything." (X-81-2)

"What was the timber? Which was that tree from which the timber was procured? He had created the heaven and the earth." (X-81-4)

All these passages show that there was no Creator of something out of nothing. The gods were only the fashioners like an architect who builds a house. Particular gods have had a part in this fashioning of the world and gods in general are also associated with this process.

There is an infinite, universal super-intelligence, what is termed a *Purusha* (Person), which is far more than the entire world of experience (X-90-1 to 4). From that infinity, the uniform, there arose a diversification (*Virat*) and on this diversified reality, there was again the intelligence (*Purusha* or Person). Even this diversified intelligence was far more immense than the visible world (X-90-5). This may be compared to the qualified (*Saguna*) Brahman or reality of later Vedanta. There were the gods and the gods handled this diversification of the absolute infinity as people handle the materials in a ritual of worship

(X-90-6). In this handling of the diversification by the gods, there were associated with them some demi-gods named Sadhyas and also some primal Sages (X-90-7). It is in this way that the entire world of phenomena arose (X-90-8 to 15).

There is a song about the birth of the gods (X-72). The gods are spoken of generally as having been born from the heaven and the earth and in various other ways.

"We will now proclaim the birth of the gods through our songs and the songs will be sung for the sake of those who will be seeing the things in the later ages." (1)

"It is Brahmanas pati (The Lord of the Songs), who first blew them out as a blacksmith blazes up the fire by blowing through the bellows, in the ages preceding that of the gods. At that time what is existent arose out of what was not existing previously." (2)

"In the first ages after the birth of the gods, what is existent arose out of what was not existent previously." (3)

The various factors in the world arose at this stage. Then when the gods remained in this vast expanse of the universal waters, there arose a mass of dust as if it were from the ground when people dance on the floor. (6)

Here the activity of the gods is compared to the dancing, whereas in another song it is compared to the activity of people engaged in a ritual of worship. It has already been said above that the activity of the god named Vishvakarman (Maker of All) was like that of a builder of houses. There is another god named Hiranyagarbha (Golden Womb) who is also mentioned as a constructor of the world (X-121). He fixed the various parts of the world. In this way it will be found that there are two theories in the *Rigveda* about the evolution of the world. According to one, there is an infinite intelligence, a *Purusha* or Person, who, being uniform without a change, became diversified into a qualified intelligence, the *virat*, and then the gods came into the picture at the time of this diversification of the infinite. The gods worked for further changes in the world, producing the various facts of the world. In this process, the primal Sages were also parties along with some demi-gods called Sadhyas.

Here there is a very interesting feature in this theory

of the evolution of the world. It is not the work of a great Personal God; it is not even the work of gods. Man had a hand even in the earliest stage of the production of the world. Throughout the *Rigveda* it will be found that the gods derived their abilities from the songs of the Sages, and also from the rituals performed by the Sages of yore. This importance of Man both in the origination and in the function of the world cannot be ignored when we examine the theory of the creation of the world. Man is supreme both in the origin and in the later developments in the world process. The very fact that the activity of the gods in the production of facts of the world is compared to the acts of the Sages in the performance of the rituals shows the great importance of Man in the affairs of the world.

The second theory is that some great god fashioned the world as a builder constructs a house in the world. He is not the creator of anything positive from a complete void. He only gave a shape to the world, just as a builder brings together the articles that are scattered about in various places. The things were already there without the proper shape and without the proper location. It is these two theories that developed into the later theories of the Vedanta, the theory of the transformation of the infinite into the finite, and the theory of the Nyaya, the theory of the activity of a superior agent in the production of the world.

There is also a third theory, namely, the theory that the world evolved from an infinite without the active agency of anyone. This is the theory that was developed in the Sankhya system of the later days. In the beginning there was nothing that could be called "what is," nor anything that could be called "what is not." There was no space. There was a life-breath from within its own powers without any physical activity of inhaling and exhaling, without air moving in or out. There was only darkness concealed in gloom. It was all like an expanse of water without any mark to determine its parts. Then there arose a Will in that infinite. That was the first seed for the activity of the mind. The poets were able to secure a knowledge of it in their heart as what is related to

the existent, remaining in what was not existent in the sense of the diversified world (X-129-1 to 4). There is a question here about the person who worked out this change and who knew about this, whence it was all produced, and the reply is that none knows about it. It cannot be the gods, since they came into being at a later stage. It is only some super-intelligence that can know about it and perhaps he too does not (X-129-6, 7). This is agnosticism and atheism, which is characteristic of the Sankhya philosophy.

These are the three main currents of thought in later days in the development of philosophical concepts in India, and all are traceable to the text of the *Rigveda*. There have been changes; but there was nothing that was an original start for a philosophical thought without a root beyond in the earlier stages.

When gods in general were introduced into the picture of the creation of the world, there was the metaphor of the rituals of worship performed by the primal Sages. There was also a reference to the art of the dance. When some great personal god, like Vishvakarman (Maker of All) was introduced into the picture, there was the art of house construction as an element in the process. This latter element shows that the *Rigvedic* people thought of the world as a work of art, beautiful and offering full happiness to the people and not at all as a place of sin and suffering. Although the details of house construction are not given, we know that the same architects constructed the chariots also and that the construction of a chariot was thought of as a work of beautiful art at that time. Their own poetry was compared to the construction of a chariot.

"This song we compose for the sake of the worthy Jatavedas (Fire) with our talents, as an architect constructs a chariot." (I-94-1)

The chariots have various colours and are decked with gold and with pearls and with gems. Their beautiful appearance is often mentioned in the *Rigveda*. The people had plenty of gold and pearls and gems and they had a talent for art. Thus they had the material and they had also the art for making their surroundings beautiful. They loved a life of beauty and happiness in a world of

beauty. They also had plenty. The comparison with the art of house building and with dance in the case of the activities of the gods in the construction of the world shows what importance the people had attached to art and to beauty. Similarly, the comparison with their rituals of worship must be associated with art and beauty. The rituals were centres of beauty. Thus when they cut their grass for allowing the gods to sit on, they found art in that act and they compared the composition of a poem to the cutting of a bunch of grass, equal in length, properly trimmed and properly tied together (I-116-1). This tradition of the worship of beauty continued in Indian thought and Kalidasa says in his *Shakuntala* that the rituals of worship performed by the Sages in the forest were beautiful, giving joy to those who saw them.

"When Your Majesty will see the charming rituals in the forest performed by the Sages who spend their life in penance, you will know to what extent your protection spreads in your domain, since it is found even in the forest regions." (II-12)

In a world of plenty, in a world of beauty, no one can think of sin and suffering and that is why we find no hell or idea of retribution in the *Rigveda*. There is no punishment meted out to sinners, while there is always mention of the reward for a good life. The supremacy of Man in the origination of the world is also a fact that should not be ignored in studying the theory of the evolution of the world in the *Rigveda*.

XVI. The People

The *Rigvedic* people are supposed to have migrated into the country only a few centuries prior to the beginning of the development of the Vedic culture in India, and that migration is put at about 2000 B.C. or a little later. This theory of the migration of the Vedic people, called the Aryans, into the country is based on external evidence; Vedic literature provides no clue to it, and on the contrary, Vedic literature goes against it. Some affinity between the Vedic people and the people in the other parts of the world who speak languages related to the Vedic, is quite plain. That affinity also shows some common home for them at some time in the history of humanity. But the question is only about the time of such migration and the place from which such a migration took place. In the beginning, the Vedic people were recognised as the originators of the civilization common to all the peoples who speak the languages related to the Vedic language, and they were given the common designation of the Aryans, since that term occurs in the Vedic texts rather prominently. The *Avesta* is also reminiscent of the Aryans. The word occurs elsewhere also. Thus Ireland, Iran and Aristocracy are reminiscent of the prevalence of this word in the different parts of the wirld. I cannot say anything about the original home in which all such people once lived. But if there had been a migration of the Vedic people into India, that must have been so far back in the history of humanity that it has little historical value in dealing with the Vedas and the Vedic people. For historical purposes, we have to accept them as the people of India. The theory of their invasion and the conquest of the original people and defeat of the Dravidians by the invading Aryans and their conversion into servants or residents of the forests and the mountains into which they were driven by the victorious Aryans, cannot stand scrutiny. Far from being the inva-

ders, the Vedic people seem to have been the targets of invasion from outside. They were bravely fighting such invasions and protecting the independence of their country with great success.

The Vedic people loved the country in which they lived and they spoke of the earth as the mother. If they had been a nomadic people wandering about and changing their habitations from time to time and if they had been moving about like this in search of water and pasture and for their agriculture and for their cattle, we cannot explain the atmosphere of plenty and happiness which prevails in the whole of the *Rigveda*. They always speak about the plenty which they had been able to enjoy in their life. To them the earth was a place of joy and they regarded the earth with motherly reverence.

"O earth, truly you support the weight of mountains in this way. You give life to the land surface through your grandeur, on your heights, O holy one." (V-84-1)

"You on whom people move about freely, the songs adore you day by day. Like horses that neigh, you shower rain, O shining one." (V-84-2)

The comparison of the rains to horses that neigh is very beautiful.

"She supports the tall trees that stand firm on the ground with her strength, on the land surface as on the lap, when the rains shower down from the water clouds shining with lightning, from the heavens." (V-84-3).

Here the earth is compared to a fond mother who holds the babies on her lap. But in most of the places, the earth is adored along with the heaven as a pair, as the parents of the world. The really charming ode on the mother earth is to be found in the *Atharvaveda*, and is recognised as one of the most beautiful literary pieces in all the languages of the world.

There are many words that mean men. There is the usual word *Jana*, "those who are born." *Marya*, *Marta* and *Martya* are "mortals". *Nara* is a "valiant one." Then there are the *Ayu*, "one who lives." The word may also be interpreted to mean "those who come here, those who move about." This does not at all mean that they were moving about or wandering about from country to coun-

try. It is their activity that is referred to by this word. Some gods are spoken of as "instigating men to work or to be active" (*Yatayaj-jana*). *Anu* is "one who breathes." There is also the word *Puru*, "those who fill." Perhaps they make the city populous. There is also the word *Pur*, related to the Greek word *Polis*, meaning "a city." Words like *Ayu* and *Anu* and *Puru* also signify some special section of the people.

There are many such sections of the people mentioned in the *Rigveda*. Sometimes they mean a king who is the chief of such sections of the people. Such are Turvasha, Yadu and others.

"O Indra and Agni (Fire), when you remain by the side of the Yadus, of the Turvashas, of the Druhyus, of the Anus, of the Purus, then, O strong one, come round hither, and thereafter you drink of this *Soma*." (I-108-8)

Here there are five people mentioned. This is the only place where all the five are mentioned together as forming a group, if reference means such a group or sections of the people or people of separate States. Even among them, some are mentioned very frequently in the *Rigveda*, while others are not so very frequent. There is a theory that these are what is meant by the term *Panchajana*, the Fivefold People, a term that is very frequently met with in the *Rigveda*. There are many places where the Five-fold People are spoken of as the special favourites of the gods and where there are prayers for the special happiness of the Fivefold People.

Another group of the people is the Bharata. Many kings of the various groups are also mentioned in the *Rigveda*. It must be said that the Bharatas are the most important of the peoples of the *Rigveda*. If the Fivefold People meant the five sections mentiond above, it is rather surprising that such a group of the favourites of the gods did not comprise the Bharatas. Perhaps the word meant only the five divisions of the people according to civic functions, namely, the wise people, the war-like people, the rich people, the working people and those outside the civic organisation, those who live in jungles and who do mean labour. Such a division was made by Jamshid, according to Ferdousi's *Sha Nameh*, in the description of

the reign of Jamshid.

There is mention of some jealousies and feuds among the different kings in the *Rigveda*. But there are no constant wars among the different States. The people formed a united nation with a common mode of life and common ideals, united by a common form of religion. They all worshipped the same gods and their mode of worship was also the same. The people from all parts met at the time of grand national festivities. There is the term *Samrat* which means "an emperor having suzerain authority over many States together." But there is nothing to show that there was anything like a political unity among the people, brought together into subordination by a common head of the States and held together by political power. They all stood together on account of the strong tie of a common culture. There is a reference to the king of the Chedis, named Kashu, having presented a poet with ten kings.

"May those two, the Ashvins, be favourable to me with their new gifts, just as Kashu of the Chedis gave a hundred camels and ten thousand cows, who made a present to me of the ten kings shining with gold." (VIII-5-37)

Some modern scholars regard the word "king" as a wrong reading. It must be admitted that it is rather a strange thing to have ten kings given as a gift or as a present to a poet by a king. The meaning must be that the king defeated ten kings who had done some harm to the poet and the poet is glorifying the exploits of that king.

This leads me to the question of the battle of ten kings, what is called the *Dasha-rajna* or a "war relating to ten kings," sometimes referred to in the *Rigveda*. It is said that the king of the Bharatas, named Sudas, was attacked by ten kings and that Sudas defeated them and put them to rout, through the help of Indra. The usual explanation is that ten kings belonging to the Vedic people had attacked king Sudas of the Bharata dynasty. The ten kings are supposed to consist of the five kings mentioned together forming the Fivefold People, as given above. The other five are supposed by some scholars to be the five mentioned in connection with the victories of Sudas.

"The Pakhtas, the Bhalanas, the Alinas, the Vishanins

and the Shivas — they all come together singing adorations; but he, Indra, the companion of the noble race (*Arya*) came to the Tritsus (the dynasty to which Sudas belonged) and fighting against the valiant warriors, he won the cows." (VII-18-7)

Here the five people who are mentioned are the worshippers of Indra. They sang in adoration of Indra. Yet Indra fought against the valiant heroes and won the cows for the Tritsus. The Tritsus are a line of the Bharatas to which Sudas belonged. I do not think that the passage, which is rather obscure, should be interpreted to mean that Indra fought against the Five People who invoked his aid, remaining on the side of Sudas who was their enemy. There are many places where it is said that Indra and other gods helped a particular king though others also invoked his aid. It is only a preference for one party and not the taking of sides with one party against another party. The idea seems to be that though the Five People invoked his aid, Indra went to the aid of Sudas against his enemies; the enemies are not the Five People.

It is also said that Indra crossed the Sindhu (Indus) river, killed Bheda, who was an enemy of Sudas, protected Sudas in his fight against the ten kings, by the power of the song of adoration (VII-33-3)

No scholar has said that Bheda was one of the ten kings involved in the battle relating to the ten kings.

"When ten kings attacked Sudas, Indra and Varuna protected Sudas along with the Tritsus, his own people." (VII-87-6)

"Ten kings who did not perform the rituals of worship for the gods, joined together, and yet they were not able to stand against Sudas in battle." (VII-83-7)

"In the battle relating to the ten kings, Indra and Varuna protected Sudas who was surrounded by the enemies." (VII-83-8)

How can we say that the Five People who are supposed to constitute the Fivefold People (*Pancha-jana*) and the five other people mentioned together as stated above, who are all worshippers of the gods, are to be styled as not performing the rituals of worship to the gods? The ten kings must be outside the fold of the Vedic people.

That must be a case of attack on India by a combination of ten foreign kings. Perhaps Kashu of the Chedis, who made a present of ten kings, must have helped Sudas in the fight and the reference must be to the victory of the king who stood by the side of the Bharata king Sudas. My chief point is that there is practically no evidence in the *Rigveda* to show that there was such a war between a Bharata king and ten other kings from among the Vedic people. This must be a case of a foreign invasion, which was simply routed by the Vedic heroes. The Indian tradition gives no clue to the passages where there is the reference to the battle relating to the ten kings. India was never invaded by a foreign conqueror in those days and was never brought under the power of a foreign ruler. They stood united and there was no real feud among the various rulers and the various states within Vedic India.

Perhaps the States were small in size. But they were great in resources. Kings rewarded the poets with immense riches consisting of cows and horses and gold and gems, all laden in carts, and also they gave the poets chariots with decorated horses. Gold and pearls came, perhaps, from the South. It is not also unlikely that gold was available in the Indus basin in immense quantities at that time. They speak of Sindhu as a region where gold was available in plenty (X-75-8). The question of the internal feuds among the States and the rulers in Vedic India needs a new study with a new orientation. My own view is that even if there had been quarrels, these did not affect the unity of the whole country or of the nation. They were personal rather than national.

There were kings and the kings had majestic surroundings which the people looked upon with awe.

"All beings are afraid of the Maruts like valiant kings who have an awe-inspiring appearance." (I-86-8)

This does not at all mean that they were cruel and that the people had a fear of any danger suspected to arise from them. It is the natural surrounding of the king which inspired this awe. Some officers of the State are mentioned or indicated in the *Rigveda*. The kings had their armies and no king could sit on the throne without such an accompaniment. The army also had chariots.

"The leader of the army, the valiant, goes in advance of the chariots, eager for victory; his army is happy with him." (IX-96-1)

This is said of Soma. The mention of the army and of the leader of the army of the chariots gives us a picture of the actual army of the State. Without such an equipment in the State, such a reference would not have been made about Soma. There is also mention of the leader of the village (*Gramani*).

"One who makes gifts is the first to be called and to come. One who makes gifts is the first to come, being the leader of the village." (X-107-5)

"May not the king Manu, who makes a thousand gifts, the leader of the village, come to grief." (X-62-11)

This need not mean that a king is only a village chieftain. The reference may be to the leader of the State consisting of villages.

There are terms like *Sabha* and *Samiti* and *Sadas*. *Samiti* and *Sadas* are places where people assemble. *Sabha* may mean the place where many shine together. *Sadas* is the place where people sit down and *Samiti* is the place where people come together. The exact significance of the terms cannot be determined from the point of view of political organisations within a State. When it is said in the song on Harmony that there might be a common council and that there might be a common assembly (*Samiti*), this assembly must be a political institution (X-191-3). *Sabha* is also a place where gamblers assemble. It is said in the song about gambling that the gambler enters the assembly (*Sabha*) when he is challenged (X-34-6). But when it is said that nourishing food would be immense in the *Sabha*, it must be the place where people assemble for the performance of the ritual of worship (VI-28-6). Similarly there is the *Vidatha*, which is from the root *Vid* (to know) and that is a place where the learned people assemble. It is usually associated with the assembly of the learned people who sit round the Altar at the time of the ritual of worship; it is usually there that a poet who has composed a new song is allowed to sit and sing his composition. To be allowed to sit there and to recite his poetry is considered the highest honour which a man can hope to receive in civic life, and a

married couple is given the benediction that they might be able to recite a poem at the Fire Altar (*Vidatha*) in their later years (X-85-26,27). This hope of being able to address such an assembly of learned people is expressed by the Sages in the songs found in the *Rigvedic* collection.

The grand rituals of worship when the *Soma* was offered to the gods were also occasions for such assembly of people from different parts of the country and from different countries. There is reference to the chariot-race as a tournament, and the reference is to the chariot-race in which the Twin-gods, the Ashvins, proved victorious; the daughter of Surya (Sun-god), accepted them as husband and ascended their chariot (I-34-5,116-17,117-13,118-5, IV-43-2, VI-63-5 and VII-69-4). Such a reference, so frequent in the *Rigveda*, would not have been present unless the chariot-race and the reward for victory had been very popular. In later epics we hear of the story of how a princess accepted her husband from among the assembled kings on account of some special martial achievement. Such is the case with Sita who accepted Shri Rama as her husband when he was able to bend the mighty bow of Shiva. There is also Draupadi, the heroine of the *Mahabharata*, who accepted Arjuna as her husband when he was able to shoot five arrows together into a revolving cage with five holes, to hit a target set within.

People assembled in large numbers on such occasions which were national festivals. There is the term *Samana*. They decorate themselves in rich robes and glittering ornaments on such occasions.

"The Dawn shines with the rays of the sun and decorates herself like a crowd of people going to a festival (*Samana*)." (I-124-8)

Formerly the ladies used to go to the places where people assemble and make offerings to the gods together; they used also to go to the festivities on such occasions (X-86-10).

"They go to him like young women going to a festivity (*Samana*)." (X-168-2)

The same idea of a young lady going to the festivity is given in VI-75-4.

"Like young ladies going to a festivity (*Samana*)" (VII-2-5)

In VI-75-4 and X-168-2, the word used is *Yosha* and in VII-2-5, the word used is *Agruvah*, both meaning "a young lady." Perhaps there is some purpose in young ladies going to such assemblies fully decorated. They desire to secure companions either in wedlock or outside of it. Since the Twin-gods, the Ashvins, were accepted by the daughter of the Sun-god by her own choice, there must have been the custom of young girls choosing their companions freely. This is only a surmise and not a statement supported by actual facts in the *Rigveda*.

The home was always a happy one. The father and the mother were there and there were also the children. There was mutual love. It has been found that the wife decorated herself properly and manifested her charms as a dutiful companion, only to her husband. This is found to be the subject of comparison where language does not reveal its charm to any one who looks on and listens, but only to the select few (X-71-4). This was also the subject of comparison for the Dawn exhibiting her physical charms to the world (I-12-7). The happy relation between husband and wife is mentioned in many places:

"A wife clings to her husband closely." (I-105-2)

"The wife is the home, she is the lap for one to rest." (III-53-4)

"An auspicious wife is the source of happiness in the home." (III-53-6)

"The wife marries the husband and such a married wife is the happiness for the man." (X-32-3)

"Fire in the home is like the wife in the home." (I-66-3)

Here the Fire is compared to a poet who sings and to a contented horse and to the ritual, in the next verse.

"May Indra go to his beloved wife in great joy." (I-82-5)

"May the Sun-god (Savitar) approach us as the husband approaches his wife." (X-149-4)

"Like a woman loved by her husband, without a fault." (I-73-3)

"They are contemptible like women talking ill of husbands." (IV-5-5)

"Make us united with a wife." (I-14-7)

One of the helpful things done by the Twin-gods, the Ashvins, to men is that they provided a wife for Vimada (I-116-1, 117-20). Everywhere we find the love between husband and wife, the duty of the wife and the sin of talking ill of the husband.

The father is also honoured in the home and the relation between the father and the son is the subject of very happy comments in the *Rigveda*:

"O Fire, be easily accessible to us as a father is to his son." (I-1-9)

"Listen to me as a father does to his son when the latter invokes him." (I-104-9)

The idea of the son invoking the father and the response of the father is very frequently met with in the *Rigveda*.

"He has disciplined me, the gambler, like a father." (II-29-5)

"May you be pleased with me like a father wth his son." (VII-54-2)

"He took him in the lap as a father does his son." (X-69-10)

The home with love between husband and wife and with the love of the father for the son is a conspicuous feature of the life of the Vedic people. But their social life was not confined to the home with a married couple and the children. Life was much wider. There are certain features in the life of the people of the time which may shock those who consider the *Rigveda* as a text book for religious worship and as a source book for the virtuous life according to certain fixed standards of morality; this has reference to food and drink and also mutual relations between men and women. People are shocked when they are told that the people in the Vedic times drank alcohol and that they ate meat, even beef. We must realise that the canons of morality and of good life in those days cannot be fixed on the standards of our notions as existing at present.

It must be admitted that the drinking of alcohol and the eating of meat are not very frequently met with in the *Rigveda*. The reference to *Soma* and to *Madhu* (honey) and to songs which delighted the gods are many in the

Rigveda and we can practically open any page in the text to find some reference or other to the articles. But in the case of alcohol and meat, we must make a search to find a reference. Yet they ate meat and they ate also beef, and they drank alcohol. They gave alcohol as offerings in rituals. This has reference to the rituals at which gods were worshipped and also rituals of the nature of sacraments and of the nature of propitiating the dead ancestors. There is the *Soma Yaga*, the *Soma* Sacrifice, at which *Soma* was offered to the gods. There is the *Vajapeya* where *Soma* and alcohol (*Sura*) were both offered and there is the *Sautramani* where alcohol was offered in the place of *Soma*. But in the actual text of the *Rigveda* there is no reference to the offering of alcohol to the gods.

"The Ashvins, the Twin-gods, poured down a hundred jars of alcohol (*Sura*)." (I-116-7)

"Those who make rich gifts won alcohol (*Sura*) for drinking." (X-107-9)

There is a reference to the house of one who brews alcohol (I-191-10). There is another reference to the evil intoxication from alcohol (VIII-2-12). This is in contrast to the good intoxication, free from stupefaction of the mind, through *Soma*. There is also a reference to drunkards (*Surashvah*), where also the reference is not of a complimentary nature (VIII-21-14). There is absolutely no reference to *Sura* (alcohol) as an object of offering to the gods, in the *Rigveda*. But when the Ashvins are spoken of as having poured a hundred jars of alcohol, it cannot be said that alcohol as a drink had been condemned or prohibited. That produces an evil intoxication (*Durmada*) and there is the word *Surashu*, "one who is subjected to the influence of alcoholic drink, a drunkard." It may be noted that the total number of references to alcohol in the entire *Rigveda* can thus be counted on one's fingers. Alcohol was brewed from grains.

In the case of eating of meat also, the references are very few in the *Rigveda*, as compared with the other articles of food mentioned. Yet there is no doubt that animal food was offered to the gods and that men also ate animal food.

"The large Fire, shining; worthy to be seen, who eats the *Vapa*, always blazing intensely." (VI-1-3)

Here *Vapa* is the flesh taken from an animal that is offered at the sacrifices. If Fire is spoken of as *Vapavan* (Owner of *Vapa*), *Vapa* or flesh must have been offered to him at the rituals. A vessel for cooking is spoken of as having *Vapa* in it (V-43-7), and this cooking must be for offering it to the Fire.

"Indra with a prominent neck, with *Vapa* in his stomach, with strong arms, destroys all dangers when he has the intoxication of *Soma*." (VIII-17-8)

There can be *Vapa* or flesh in his stomach only if Indra eats flesh as offered at the rituals.

"To the Fire who has the bull as food, who has the cow as food, who carries *Soma* on his back, the creator, we offer these songs." (VIII-43-11)

This shows that the animal which is killed and whose flesh is offered is both a cow and a bull. About the pressing stone it is said:

"They sing; they know the sweet honey; they make a noise at the sight of the flesh that is cooked." (X-94-3)

The sound made by the pressing stones is compared to the songs of joy at seeing the sweet honey and at seeing the cooked flesh, which must have been near by. The Fire is asked to cook the goat offered as his portion, with his heat (X-16-4). Later the Fire is asked to carry that to the dead ancestors (X-16-5). What is to be carried must be the flesh of the goat mentioned in the previous verse.

There is evidence to show that animals were offered to the Fire at the rituals. At the ritual a wooden post was erected. That can be only for tying the animals which were to be killed and whose flesh was to be offered in the Fire for the gods. The post is asked to remain erect like the Sun-god for when it stands erect it is able to win victory for the people, at the time they sing along with the other singers (I-36-13). When it stands erect it is able to protect the people from sins, and they are asked to make the people remain high up so that they can live and move about (I-36-14). There are five verses where the wooden post is asked to stand erect at the place of the ritual and it is

said that he happens to be a young man clad in beautiful robes (III-8-1 to 5). Shunahshepa speaks about his precarious condition when he was tied on to the three wooden posts (I-24-13). Elsewhere Shunahshepa is spoken of as having been tied to a thousand stakes (V-2-7).

"The heroes cooked a fat goat." (X-27-17)

"For whom horses, buffaloes, oxen, cows and goats were brought out and offered in that Fire." (X-91-14)

"He cooked a hundred buffaloes for Indra." (VI-17-11)

There is again a reference to one hundred buffaloes relating to Indra (VIII-77-10). Dirghatamas says: "The heroes cooked the spotted bull" (I-163-43). He then says that this became the primal Law. There is an indication of cooking an ox on the occasion of a ritual. Cows and bulls and goats are articles of food among nearly all the nations of the world. But here it is found that buffaloes and horses are also offered to the gods. There is a whole song relating to the horse to be sacrificed (I-162).

There is not that frequent reference to animal food in describing the gods. Gods are spoken of as fond of *Soma* and honey. But there is no such reference to the delight which the gods take in eating the flesh of animals. Yet it is certain that animals were offered to the gods. And the conclusion is that Vedic people also ate the flesh of animals. I do not know whether horse's and buffalo's flesh also formed articles of common food among them. They were offered to the gods and the presumption is that man gave to the gods what food he himself was in the habit of eating.

The Vedic people drank alcohol and they ate meat. They had their happy homes where they enjoyed the plenty. But they enjoyed their social life even outside the home. When it has been said that young ladies decorated themselves profusely and went to gatherings during occasions of festivity, it must have been for securing love and friendship, and such love and friendship might not have always been within the bounds of wedlock. There is a profusion of evidence in the *Rigveda* that man-woman relationship was freely practised outside wedlock in those days. This is a factor in the social life of those days which became rather circumscribed in extent in later times. Such

friendships were not looked upon with any sort of condemnation in society. Such ladies who sought and entertained free love with men had a respectable place in the social structure. There is no evidence of any sort of disapproval of such practices noticeable in the *Rigveda*.

There is a word *Jara* which then, as in later Sanskrit, meant "a lover outside wedlock." The word must be from the root *Jar*, which means "to approach." The root also means "to sing." There is the third meaning "to get aged." The last of these cannot have any reference in this context. The only possibility is that the word means "one who approaches" or "one who sings." The former seems to be the more probable though the latter is not improbable. *Jara* can be a man who sings in praise of a lady beloved. The word occurs rather frequently in this sense, i.e., "one who approaches a lady beloved." In some cases it simply means "one who is an intimate friend," without any sense of a special motive of enjoyment in the company of a woman. There are places where there is the mention of a *Jara* going after a lady beloved. The cases where a lady beloved makes an approach to a lover are rare comparatively, though not absent.

Fire is spoken of as the lover (*Jara*) of the maidens, the husband of the mothers (I-66-4). Fire is also spoken of as the *Jara* (lover) of the Dawn (I-69-1-5. VII-10-1). When it is Dawn, there is the Fire also blazing up. This is the relationship. The wind is asked to awaken the rich as a lover (*Jara*) awakens a sleeping beloved (I-134-3). Soma remains among men as a *Jara* goes to the lady and remains there (IX-38-4). Soma is again spoken of as singing, as a lover sings for the beloved (IX-96-23). Soma moves as a lover moves towards the beloved (IX-101-14). The ten fingers go to Soma as a beloved approaches a lover (IX-56-3). In this, there is the case of a lady approaching a man. Fire is the lover (*Jara*) of the ritual of worship (X-7-5). The singer is asked to awaken Indra, the *Jara* (friend) of the singer (X-42-2). Here the word means only a dear friend, in both the cases. The above selections show that women used to freely go to men and that men also freely went to women as friends, as lovers. Instead of the word *Jara*, the word *Marya*, a heroic mortal, is also

sometimes found in the same contexts.

In most of the above cases, there is the word *Yosha*, which means "a young lady." The word must be from the root *Yu* which means "to be united." *Yosha* is a lady who is closely bound to a man, who is intimately attached to a man. There are also used the words *Kanina*, *Kanya*, etc. The words mean "one who is charming" and are related to the word *Kanaka* which means "gold".

There is only one case in the actual available text of the *Rigveda* where a lady approaches a man, and that is when Yami approaches Yama. Otherwise this relation of man and woman is not the subject of a poem in the *Rigveda*. There is also a case where the queen named Romasha approached king Bhavayavya for conjugal enjoyment, and the king began to talk in a light-hearted way regarding her age and her ability to give joy to him; then she replies that she is as grown up and as mature as any one and that he could have a close search. She actually says that there is hair on her as on the body of a sheep belonging to the women of the Gandhara country (Kandahar) (I-126-6,7). This must be some broken piece from another long poem, attached to the end of this poem.

Few of the conjugal acts are found mentioned in the *Rigveda* as it is now available. There is mention of embrace. Two rivers say that for the sake of the Sage Vishvamitra, they would bend down their course, as a young lady bends down for a man to embrace (III-33-10). Yami says that Yama will be embraced by another woman as a creeper winds round a tree and Yama repeats this idea (X-10-13,14). She also says that she would surrender her body to him as a wife does to her husband (X-10-7). There are some more places where there is a reference to embracing. I have not seen any reference to other items like a kiss. But the actual conjugal act is referred to in some places. The two, the mortar and the pestle, in pressing the juice from the *Soma* stalk, are compared to the two hips in functioning during the conjugal act, and the two hips must be those of the husband and the wife (I-28-2). The Maruts hold their legs in such a way in which mothers do when they are in conjugal act (literally, the act which results in the birth of a son—*Putrakrthe*

(V-61-3). I do not take this as a reference to the delivery of the baby.

The references to the association of men and women outside wedlock show that there was an atmospere of *Shringara* (love) in which the Vedic literature grew up. Some literary pieces like the dialogue between the king Bhavayavya and his queen Romasha and the dialogue between Yama and Yami and that between Pururavas and Urvashi show that there had been growing at that time a literature in which love was the chief theme. From Bharata's *Natya Shastra* (treatise on Dramaturgy) we find that there must have been an immense dramatic literature available to him in which love had been the chief subject matter and in which the man-woman relationship outside wedlock also played a very important part. But in classical literature we do not know of a single major poem in which women who lived their social life outside wedlock find a place. The *Mricchakatika* of Shudraka is the only drama in which the heroine belongs to that class. But she is a member of that class only in name and she does not really function as a member of that class. Bharata speaks of the type of dramas called the *Prakaranas* in which such women were freely introduced. This feature in literary patterns completely dropped out at a later stage and it is only in the type called the *Bhana* that we find mention of their life. But in such a *Bhana*, they do not come on the stage and they are introduced into the theme of the drama only in the description by the single character who makes his appearance on the stage. But from Bharata's work we know that such characters were freely introduced on the stage in the *Prakaranas* type of dramas. We do not know whether dramas existed in Vedic times. If there had been dramas at that time, such characters might also have freely appeared on the stage. In the poetry of the Vedic times, the activities of such women must have played a very prominent part and they are reflected in the available text of the *Rigveda*.

There are many facts about family and social life regarding which the evidence available is too feeble to enable us to come to any definite conclusion. Such is the case about widows. There is reason to believe that a widow

married the dead husband's brother. It is certain that in a family it is the brother who had the responsibility for the maintenance of the family. Perhaps when a brother died, another had the responsibility to maintain the wife of the deceased one; there need not have been any definite marriage with the brother of the dead husband. We find little about widows in the *Rigveda*. Then there is the question of monogamy, bigamy and polygamy. There are instances of a man having more than one wife. They also quarrelled with one another. Thus a poet says that when he fell into a deep, dark well, his ribs had been squeezing from either side like co-wives (*Sapatnis*), pressing against one another (I-105-8). The general system must have been one of Monogamy.

There is the problem of unmarried women who had to stay in their father's homes. This is considered a great misfortune and the Twin-gods, the Ashvins, had helped a lady named Ghosha in securing a husband when she was getting old in her father's home (I-117-7). Similarly, men wanted wives and there is the story of the same gods having secured a wife for Vimada (I-112-19, 117-20). Then aged people wanted to be young again and enjoy life. The same gods helped the aged Chyavana in the restoration of his youth (I-117-13). Again the gods named the Ribhus, three brothers, sons of Sudhanvan, who were mortals and who later went to heaven as gods eligible to partake of the *Soma* offering, restored youth to their aged parents (I-20-4, 110-8). All these references show how happy people were in their home life and how eager they were to continue their lives. There are frequent prayers that one may be allowed to live through the entire allotted span of life and that no part of it may be taken away from one.

XVII. Stories

Man has shown a tendency, even from the earliest period of history, to build a story around special events and individuals. Certain events appeal to Man more than the ordinary ones, and some gifted persons introduce that event into the frame-work of a story, adding events, adding details, selecting events and omitting or altering events. In all such stories there would be some special personality involved, becoming the object of special notice by the people. In course of time, the stories are accepted as true facts. Such stories about the personalities become themes for poetry or simple narrations in prose. They are alluded to by others. Stories develop into different forms. There is always a long stretch of time between the actual personality and the events that became story, and the formation of the story itself. It is in the form of a river which starts from the mountain top and flows into the ocean. There are many curves and many additions in its course, and in the later stages of its course it breaks up into different channels. A collection of stories found in any literature presupposes a long course of development.

The *Rigveda* is not a story book. But it is a book of many stories, with many events and many heroes. Such stories show that there must have been an immense wealth of story literature current at the time. Such stories become national property and all the poets allude to them in their own compositions. Unless the stories are well known to the people at large, such allusions in poetry to the stories have no purpose, no meaning. It is the popularity of the stories that justifies the allusions to them by other poets. The stories must relate to extraordinary events which make a special appeal to the people; such stories first develop among the people themselves and then only it is that they find their way into poetry. Poets take such stories as their themes because they are popular. Then they are alluded to in other poems. What is so alluded to

in poetry, cannot be what is simply in the mouth of the people. They must have been in their poems. We do not know in what form such stories got currency among the Vedic people. Considering the importance that is attached to the poetic form of language in metres, the probability is that the stories were current among the people in the form of short ballads. There are such ballad songs even within the *Rigveda*. The exploits of Indra in killing the dragon named Vritra and the exploits of Vishnu in the form of his three strides over the world are mentioned in the *Rigveda* itself as ballads. Thus the poems start with the statement:

"I will now sing about the exploits and heroic deeds of Vishnu." (I-154-1)

And,

"I will now sing about the exploits and heroic deeds of Indra." (I-21-1)

The whole of the latter poem is included in this book (Ch. II). There is another song which starts with:

"I will now sing about the exploits and heroic deeds of the horse, the winner, born among the gods, sitting in this assembly of the wise people." (I-162-1)

In the *Rigveda* it is the exploits of the gods and the heroes that made a deep impression on the hearts of the poets and also of the people at large. They also sing about animals like a horse which has a close connection with the heroes. They sing about heroism. Personal relations and simple events in the home also become the theme for poetry. Thus the dialogue between Yama and Yami and between king Pururavas and Urvashi are of this nature. There is a similar dialogue relating to family life in which Indra, the heroic god and Indrani, his consort, and a pet monkey named Vrishakapi take part (X-86). The song about the wedding is also a poem of that kind. But the stories of great heroes find a place in the *Rigveda* mainly as stories alluded to by those who composed the songs of the *Rigveda*. The stories relate to gods and men. The Twin-gods called the Ashvins can claim the largest number of stories alluded to them in the *Rigveda*. There are also stories in which Indra and the group of gods called the Maruts find a place in the centre. There are two poets

of the *Rigveda* who have made a collection of such stories by way of allusions in their songs. They are Kutsa and Kakshivan. Both Kutsa and Kakshivan happen to be the heroes about whom there are stories alluded to in the text of the *Rigveda*. We do not know whether the poets Kutsa and Kakshivan who composed the songs are also the heroes of the stories alluded to in the text of the *Rigveda*.

Kutsa has a song of twenty-five verses, and in the first twenty-three of them, he alludes to a large number of stories that must have been current in those days among the people. They all relate to the Twin-gods called the Ashvins. The song is I-112. As in the case of many songs, the poet starts with a worship of the Fire and some other gods before he begins his song. The fact is that in most of the cases the songs were composed by the poets and then recited in the presence of the assembly of the wise people, sitting before the Fire Altar at the ritual. In this case, such a preliminary worship is contained in the first half of the opening verse and then the poet begins the allusions to the various stories in which the Twin-gods, the Ashvins, take the central place.

"Those succours with which you two guided the fighting warrior to his share of the victory, with those succours come, Ye two, to this place, O Ashvins." (1)

In most of the verses more than one story are alluded to. There is the story of the barren cow that the Ashvins made fat and full of milk (3). Trimantu became wise through their aid (4). They gave protection to Rebha and Vandana and also to Kanva (5). Antaka, Bhujju, Karkandhu and Vayya are mentioned in another verse (6). A lady named Shuchanti was given a prosperous home, and Atri was saved from burning fire; Prishnigu and Purukutsa also received protection from them (7). A bird was caught by a wolf and they protected it from its jaws (8). Kutsa mentions himself as the recipient of such help from the Ashvins, along with Vasishtha and Narya (9). They had protected a lady warrior named Vishpala who was fighting in a terrific battle (10). A merchant named Aushija (son of Ushik) and Kakshivan are mentioned together (11). Here it may be mentioned that the poet Kakshivan, mentioned in the same verse, is also known as the son of Ushik (I-18-1).

The Ashvins are spoken of as having gone round the sun; they also helped king Mandhata to become the Lord of the Earth and helped also the poet Bharadvaja, one of the chief poets of the *Rigveda* (the whole of the second Book being assigned to him with a few songs to the members of his family) (13). Atithigva, Divodasa and Trasadasyu are also famous kings in the *Rigveda* with their own compositions included in the text, and the protection which they received from the Ashvins are mentioned by Kutsa in this poem (14). They brought arrows made of reeds of Syumarashmi (16). They brought wives for Vimada (19). They brought honey for the bees (21). A Kutsa is mentioned as the son of Arjuna, who had received protection from them (23). Here Kutsa is the poet and he mentioned a Kutsa as having received protection from the Ashvins (9); here there is another Kutsa, son of Arjuna, mentioned.

Kakshivan starts his song about the Ashvins and sings about the protection which they had rendered to many on different occasions and in differet conditions (I-116).

"For Nasatyas (the Ashvins) I trim the songs as they trim a bunch of grass for the ritual; I send them forth as the wind propels the cloud." (1)

This is the first half; the allusions to the stories start in the second half. The first is the story of the Ashvins having secured a wife for Vimada, along with a chariot with war equipment. Kutsa says (I-112-19) that they had brought many wives (in the plural) to Vimada. Here it is put in the singular number. There is the story of Bhujju, mentioned by Kutsa (I-112-6), but given in greater detail by Kakshivan. The story is alluded to in three verses here.

"Lo, Tugra cast off Bhujju into the vast ocean as a miser does his wealth when he is about to die, O Ashvins. You two took him out of the waters in ships which were full of life, which could fly through the aerial region." (3)

"The ships had to be speeding through for three days and for three nights; with such flying ships, O Ashvins, you took Bhujju safe, out of the desolate region of the ocean to the shores of the watery ocean, with the three ships which had a hundred oars, as if with chariots with six horses yoked to them." (4)

"This is a great exploit of yours, O Ashvins, that in that ocean with no beginning, with no place to stop, where no one could get a firm hold, you took Bhujju safe to his home, placing him in a ship propelled by one hundred oars." (5)

This song is by Kakshivan himself and he says that the Ashvins gave a prosperous home for Kakshivan when he sang in adoration of them (7). From the strong hoofs, as from a fountain, they poured out a hundred jars of beer (7). Here Kakshivan is spoken of as Pajriya (son of Pajra), while the poet is known as the son of Dirghatamas and Ushik. When the Sage Chayana was getting old, they were able to remove from him that decay due to old age as if they were removing a mail armour from him (10). Vandana was buried in a cave and they were able to rescue him from that place as a treasure is taken out of its hiding place (11). The poet speaks of this exploit as worthy of praise and gifts of offerings. They secured the secret of an esoteric wisdom called the Honey Wisdom from the Sage named Dadhyang which he revealed to them with the head of a horse (12). He also sings of the help which the heroine named Vishpala, who was fighting in a severe battle, received from them (15). Here it is said that she was given an iron leg enabling her to move about in the battle-field. This story was indicated by Kutsa (I-12-10). The daughter of the Sun-god ascended their chariot when they won the chariot-race, as if she were getting on to the winning post in a tournament; all the gods approved and congratulated them on this in the heartiest way (17). This is noticed in the wedding song (X-85-14). That song is included in this book (Ch. X).

The song is in twenty-five verses. In it the poet gives more details about the events than what is contained in the allusions by Kutsa. Kakshivan has four songs about the Ashvins and the stories are alluded to in all of the songs. I do not know why he composed four songs one after the other (I-116 to 119), giving the stories in all of them. The first two of the songs are in twenty-five verses, as in the case of the songs of Kutsa. Kutsa mentions two Kutsas, one being designated as the son of Arjuna and he also mentions Kakshivan. But Kakshivan does not men-

tion Kutsa at all in alluding to the stories of the Ashvins. He mentions a Kutsa as associated with Indra, in a later song. The stories must have been very popular and the people must have known of the whole story when there is such an allusion in a song about them. It is only a surmise that the stories must have been current at that time in the form of short poems. The stories were known in tradition which continued in the field of Vedic exegesis and the commentators give details when they explain the passages in their commentaries. They do not say where the stories had been taken from and they do not cite a single passage from any original source.

There are two more sets of ancient texts called the *Brahmanas* and the *Upanishads* which fall within the Vedic literature. Each of them explains a particular aspect of the original texts of the Vedas, the *Brahmanas* explaining the rituals in the original texts and the *Upanishads* explaining the philosophy. In the explanation of the rituals, there is mention of two kinds of books called the *Itihasas* and the *Puranas*. An *Itihasa* is a collection of ancient stories and a *Purana* is a collection of ancient lore. In later times the *Itihasas* contained much of ancient lore introduced in the course of the narration of the stories as in the case of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, the two works of the later times bearing the name of *Itihasa*. Similarly, in works like the *Vishnu Purana* and the *Bhagavata Purana*, which are specimens of the *Puranas*, there are the stories of ancient heroes also narrated in great detail. These two kinds of works must have been known even from the most ancient period in the history of India, and perhaps they go back even to the *Rigvedic* time. The stories alluded to in the available text of the *Rigveda* must have been contained in the *Itihasas* of those days. We can only make some surmises; there is no evidence of any such literary pattern coming down to us from that age.

The stories relate to the ancient heroes. They have grown up in an atmosphere of a settled form of life among the nation. That shows that the people had settled down in the region for a very long period prior to the composition of the songs collected in the *Rigveda*. They are not of the nature of the stories found in the Homeric poems

which are reminiscent of the conquest of the country by an invading people. There are indications of battles; but such battles are not those fought by an invading people. They are undertaken by a people who had settled down in the country and who had to face their enemies within the country and also from outside. They are defensive battles. Stories in which battles form a part are, however, not very numerous among the stories that are alluded to in the *Rigveda*. The stories mostly relate to the common life of the people in their homes.

Besides such stories alluded to in the *Rigveda*, a large number of stories have gathered round personalities that shine in the *Rigveda*. Such stories are all post-Vedic. Many of them are also very beautiful and touching, like the story of Shunahshepa included in this book (Ch. VII). The name Dirghatamas means "one in long gloom." He is a poet who had attained some kind of illumination and he might have taken that name after his illumination when he was able to emerge from the long period of blinding ignorance. But a story grew up how he was born blind as a result of a curse from his paternal uncle and how later the gods granted him the power of sight. There is the story of a young man named Shyavashva who was of a contemplative nature; he desired to marry the daughter of a king but the latter did not want a man of that temperament as a son-in-law. Shyavashva was very sad. Later he saw the group of gods called the Maruts and though he did not recognise them in the beginning, he knew who they were and he composed songs in adoration of them, describing them in their real nature. He became a recognised poet and he was no more that contemplative visionary. The king was happy at that stage to give his daughter to him in marriage. The Night was sent to the king to report to him about the change in the young man. This too is a story full of pathos (given by Sayana in V-26). There are many such post-Vedic stories that developed around the *Rigveda* and the persons connected with it. But they are not strictly stories within the *Rigveda*. They are all very charming. Very few of them are preserved in the later Epics. They all deserve to be collected in the form of books as the earliest story books of India. Many of them

changed their form when they found their way into the later Epics. The number of such beautiful stories within the *Rigveda* and related to the *Rigveda* runs into hundreds. Now they are all scattered in the works on the exegesis of the *Rigveda*. Besides such stories, there are many that are found in the *Brahmanas* that explain the rituals of the original texts, and also in the *Upanishads*.

The stories are full of human touch and are also full of human interest as a consequence. We do not see gods who wield a sceptre threatening humanity with dire punishments unless Man obeys the law of God. We do not see kings with their armies starting on an invasion or for repression within the country. There are no ascetics who consider the world as a place of sin and suffering, calling on Man to run away from this danger. We see only human beings and if there are kings with their weapons of war, or gods, we see them only as moving freely with ordinary men. What is most conspicuous is their human nature and their communion with ordinary men. We see life at home and in society. The people had their plenty and they had their enjoyments with drinks and food and sports. They had their happy homes. The stories reflect the civilization of the time. We notice no clash of interest among different groups within the nation. We find no passions like jealousy and enmity.

XVIII. Miscellaneous

The *Rigveda*, as the name signifies, is essentially a book of adorations and they are addressed to a large number of gods. When we speak of gods in the *Rigveda*, we should not think of a religion and another world in which the gods live and to which Man hopes to go. No god is generally a god of a religion unless that god has a message for humanity about the other world in which the god abides and to which the virtuous people who obey the laws of god can go—a world where there is a happiness that is not available in this world of mortals. But the gods of the *Rigveda* are not the gods of religion; they are gods of humanity. They come to the world of Man, they mix with men and they help men to continue life on the earth. They help Man in his wars against his enemies and they provide him with plenty for a happy life. They help him with long life, free from diseases and suffering. Thus they make the world free from sins and suffering. It is not possible to give an idea of all the gods. Some of the gods are described in some of the chapters of this book. In this chapter descriptions of some other representative gods are given to show what kind of gods they are.

The Ribhus are a group of three gods, three brothers, sons of Sudhanvan, which name means "one with a good bow or one who is an expert in handling a bow, an archer." They are artisans, and through their good work, they reached heaven as gods and they partake of the oblations of *Soma* offered to the gods at rituals. They are Ribhu, Vibhva and Vaja; but they they are known by the common name of Ribhus. The following song deals with them (I-20):

"This song which will best bring riches, has been composed by us, the poets, to be sung with our mouths, about him who has become a god." (1)

"Who produced with his mind, a pair of horses that

can be yoked through our songs; through his powers, he attained to the position of partaking in the ritual of worship." (2)

"They produced for the Ashvins, a chariot that can move about freely, and easy to travel in; they also produced a cow that yields plenty of milk." (3)

"The Ribhus, with their words of truth, dedicated to the straight paths, made their aged parents young again." (4)

"And you made again into four, the new vessel produced by the divine Tvashtar (the architect)." (6)

"They the fast moving ones, took up and attained, through their good deeds, their share in the rituals of worship along with the gods." (8)

Here the singular is used in the first two verses and the plural in the rest. In the first two verses what is described is not a group of the gods, but their transformation into divinity. Then they are taken as a group and the plural number is used.

Pushan is a god that has some solar affinity. He is the guardian of the path and drives away dangers and enemies from the path. The following song is I-42:

"O Pushan, traverse the path along with us, and O son of the clouds, drive away the dangers from the path. Escort us, O god, walking in advance of us," (1)

"O Pushan, whatever makes its presence, which will do us harm, which will bring us misfortune, remove that from our path." (2)

"That enemy of ours, who will rob us on our path, who thinks of doing us harm, remove him far away from the path." (3)

"O Pushan, carry us away beyond those who may be hiding; make our paths good, easy to traverse. Take cognisance of this ritual of worship." (7)

"O Pushan, lead us to the place of pasture where there is plenty of barley; let there be no new dangers on the Path. Take cognisance of this ritual." (8)

Vayu or *Vata* is the wind. It is noted for its strength, its ability to produce impact. Perhaps what is connected with the fourth of the Five Elements of later day philosophy, is a development of this Vayu or Vata; that is called

by this name in later days. The following song is X-168:

"I will now sing out about the chariot of the Wind. Its rolling sound comes and it moves breaking away the things on the way. It touches the skies, making the whole place red in colour. And it also goes about throwing away the dusts on the ground." (1)

"All things fly fast following the banner of the Wind. All things go to him like ladies going to a festive gathering. The Wind-god goes, joined on to them all, sitting on the same chariot. He is the king of all created things." (2)

I think that this is a beautiful description of the strong wind with which all the things move in the same direction; the wind goes along joined to all such things as a king goes to battle with his army. He is the centre to which everything goes like ladies going to a festive gathering.

"Going along the paths in the intermediate space, he does not take rest on any single day. He is the companion of the waters, he is the first among those that are born, he is the guardian of the Law. Where could he have been born? Whence could he have made his appearance?" (3)

"He is the soul of the gods. He is the womb for the entire world of creation. This god moves about according to his will. His sound is being heard, but his form is not seen. To that wind we make this offering of oblation." (4)

This is a fine personification of a phenomenon of Nature, pictured as a king with all his paraphernalia. We see his majesty and he is quite true to his real nature as a phenomenon of Nature.

Vishnu is the great god in the supreme position. He traverses the entire universe with his three strides. The following song is VII-100.

"That man when he longs for riches receives them if he makes offerings to Vishnu who moves over the wide regions. He who worships him with a mind devoted to Vishnu, will be gaining thus much of heroism." (1)

"O Vishnu who moves about fast in this way, may you grant us good thoughts which will be coveted by all the people, which will never betray and desert us, so that our contact with the riches that have come to us so easily, that

are intensely bright, that secure for us many horses, may be enduring." (2)

"This God Vishnu, with his greatness, has three times traversed this earth which shines with hundreds of lights. May Vishnu remain the most powerful among the powerful. The name of this oldest Vishnu is glowing." (3)

"This Vishnu has traversed this earth to enable Man to secure a habitation. The poets who sing about this Vishnu are firm and eternal. He has made the births of men glorious and he provided them with a happy abode." (4)

The heaven and the earth are conceived of as a pair, as the parents of the gods and also of Man. This song about them is VI-70.

The Heaven and the Earth, being supported by Varuna, are full of ghee; they hold the worlds together, they are wide, spread out, yielding honey as a cow yields milk, having beautiful form, firmly established, never ageing, having immense virility." (1)

"Incomparable, bearing immense flow of riches, yielding nourishments as a cow yields milk, yielding ghee, beautifully formed, maintaining pure ordinances, shining, making this world shine, may you, the two worlds, sprinkle nourishment for us, what Manu has established." (2)

"That mortal who, O the two worlds, O the two abodes, makes offerings to both of you, moving forward in a straightforward manner, he it is that succeeds in the end. He would attain a noble state along with progeny, along the paths of Law. What have been sprinkled upon by both of you, take up various forms abiding by the right ordinance." (3)

"O Heaven and Earth, grant us sweet honey in plenty, both of you who shed honey, who yield honey as a cow yields milk, who abide in the ordinances of sweet wisdom, the two divinities holding up for us both the rituals and riches, great glory, victory and great heroism." (5)

"May the Heaven and the Earth fill us with strength, the father and the mother, who know everything, endowed with great powers, enjoying each other's company, the two worlds, the producers of every happiness; may you estab-

lish in us everything that we long for, victory and riches." (6)

There are two songs about the horse that is to be immolated at the ritual. They are I-162 and 163. Some passages selected from them are very interesting. The following are selections from the first of the two.

"May not Mitra, Varuna, Aryaman, Indra with the Ribhus as companions, and the Maruts overlook us when we sing about the heroic achievements of the fast running horse born among the gods, sitting in front of the Altar where the learned people assemble." (1)

"This goat is being carried in front of the victorious horse, as the portion to be offered to Pushan, what is pleasing to every god, because the Architect (Tvashtar) longs for this as a sacrificial cake, which is dear to him, along with the horse, in order that he may secure great glory." (3)

"Those who cut and shape the tree into a sacrificial post, also those who carry the post, those who fashion the top of the post to which the horse is to be tied, and those who undertake to collect the materials for cooking the horse, may there be success and progress for us who take up such work." (6)

"What rope there may be for tying up the horse, that rope which is the rein to be placed in its mouth, or what grass there may be that is to be placed in its mouth, may they all go to the gods together." (8)

There is a full description of the method of cooking the horse in all its details. Now here are some selections from the second of the two songs about the horse.

"When you were born in the beginning from the ocean or from the intermediate space, you made a great sound, there were the two wings of a kite for you to fly and there were the legs of a deer for you to run. Your birth, O horse, is worthy of being sung about." (1)

"Trita yoked this horse when Yama gave it to him; Indra for the first time mounted it; the Gandharva (a demi-god) took hold of his reins. O Vasus, from the sun you produced this horse." (2)

"You are Yama, you are Aditya (son of Aditi), O horse, you are Trita on account of secret ordinances. You have

been taken along with the *Soma*. They speak of three ropes to tie you with, in the heaven." (3)

"Here I find your supreme form, longing to win food in the place of the cow. When the mortals have wished for your food, then you came out as the plants and the herbs, being the best food." (7)

"The chariot follows you, O horse, the heroic mortal follows you, the cows follow you, the luck of young ladies follows you. The hosts of the Maruts follow you and secure your companionship. The gods measured your heroic exploits." (8)

"Your leg is made of iron, with the hoofs made of gold. The legs can run as fast as the mind. Even Indra was surpassed by them. The gods went to eat the oblation of him who mounted the horse in the beginning." (9)

"O horse, your body can run very fast; your mind has the speed of the wind. Your hoofs stand up everywhere on the earth; they wander about in the forest regions, striking down everything." (11)

These two songs from which select verses are given here, had been sung by the poet, sitting before the Altar in the assembly of the learned people. The horse, as described here, is to be immolatd and the flesh to be offered to the gods as oblations at the ritual. In both the songs the matter is made clear. *Soma* and the bull represent the physical power (*Kshatra*) and the honey and the horse represent intellectual power (*Kratu*). A goat is also to be offered along with the horse, as is plain from the statements in the two poems. Animal sacrifice is not very frequently alluded to in the *Rigveda*. It is in the ritualistic Veda, the *Yajurveda*, that the animal sacrifice is fully described. The goat seems to be the chief object for the sacrifice. The horse and the bull and the buffalo are also mentioned as such objects for sacrifice.

Both *Soma* and the bull, and the horse are symbolical of certain facts in Man's life, like his physical power and his intellectual power. The *Rigveda* is full of mysticism and symbolism. The fact that in the objects of Nature, and behind them, the poets saw certain life-powers in function, shows that they were all mystics. There are many symbols in the *Rigveda;* this has reference to objects

like the bull and the horse and also to certain numbers. Chariots and its parts are also symbolical of certain factors in the universe. In the poem where Dirghatamas explains how he sought and gained the light of wisdom (I-164), there are many verses that are of a symbolical nature.

Time moves and it is quite appropriate that Time should be symbolised by something which, by its nature, is also in a state of movement. That thing is what was quite well known in those days, namely, the chariot. The chariots and the wheels and the spokes of the wheels and the horses and the occupants of the chariot—all such factors come into the picture in any symbolism relating to Time. Along with this, there are various numbers also introduced relating to Time, like the year, the months, the days and the seasons.

"Seven people yoke the chariot with a single wheel. One horse draws it, bearing seven names. The wheel has three navels, and the wheel is what will never age, what will never be overcome. All the beings in the world remain there." (2)

"There are the seven who mounted this chariot, which has seven wheels, and seven horses draw this chariot. There are seven sisters who utter songs together and the seven names of the cows are kept hidden in it." (3)

"That wheel of Law is not to be decayed, which has seven spokes. That rolls on around the heaven. Here there are seven hundred and twenty sons in pairs remaining in it." (11)

"When the wheel with five spokes rolls on, all the beings in the world remain in it. Even when there is an immense load to carry, its axle does not get heated. From eternity, it does not break down, when it has its navel." (13)

"Twelve spokes, one wheel, three navels—who indeed has known this? Therein together, like poles, three hundred and sixty have been placed without shaking at all." (48)

Without the key for solving many of the riddles involved in this symbolism of facts and of numbers, it is not possible to understand the poetry of the *Rigveda*. Poets express themselves in a language which is not within the grasp of the common people. They have in their minds

certain ideas which the ordinary people cannot detect in the language of the poets.

In the imagery of the chariot, one can easily find time, the disc of the sun, the twelve months and the seasons calculated as five or six, the three hundred and sixty days, consisting of seven hundred and twenty days and nights in pairs, and the various other facts. The seven sisters and the seven names are related to the mystic aspect of language, which is found in the language of the poets.

While the *Rigveda* is essentially a book of adorations, the *Atharvaveda* is essentially a book of certain charms or spells or incantations to secure welfare and to avoid evils. This is identified with magic and witchcraft. I do not enter into the question of the powers of sound in the form of language; this has developed into a great science in India, what is called the *Mantra Shastra*, the science of secret language. There had been the same science developed in Iran also in those days when the *Avesta* took its form. There is reference in the Avesta to the *Manthra*, the *Baeshaza* (*Bhesaja* or medicine) and *Keretana* or surgical operation as methods of remedy against diseases. The *Rigveda* also contains many songs of the nature of the songs found in the *Atharvaveda* along such lines. In the latter there are some songs relating to love between man and woman. In the *Rigveda* it is found that some dialogues centre round this element in Man's life. There is still another song in which such a love is the theme, appearing in a new form, different from what it is in the dialogue between Yama and Yami and between Pururavas and Urvashi. This is the song about Agastya and his wife Lopamudra (I-179). Lopamudra complains:

"I have been working for many years past, during day and night and at early morn. Old age is now ruining the charms of my body. The virile persons should approach their wives." (1)

"There have been in prior days, many Sages who had been maintaining the Law; they had been singing about the Law along with the gods. They have all gone away and they have not closed the days of such people. They should approach their wives with their virility." (2)

To this Agastya replies:

"It is not in vain that we have undergone fatigue, because the gods have been protecting us. Now we will be able to encounter all the enemies. We will be able to come out victorious in a hundred battles, when we will be able to approach each other, coming together as a pair." (3)

"Now love has taken possession of me as it does a roaring bull. It has arisen from here or from somewhere there. Lopamudra can now draw her virile husband towards her; now the weak will be drawing out the strong one." (4)

We do not know the background. This must be a small bit from somė longer poem. Agastya must have been spending his time in communion with the gods whom he saw in his vision and he must have been singing about and thinking about the truth of the world and of its law, completely neglecting his wife. When the wife complains about it after a long lapse of time, he says that they have not wasted the long period of time; they had some gain. Now after such a period of contemplation and abstract thinking, worldly matters have again sprung up in his heart and they would be able to enjoy life as husband and wife. She, the weak woman, has been able to drag him, the strong ascetic.

There is one poem about poison, and it deals with venomous animals and articles which contain poison like poisoned arrows. It is the last song in the first Book (I-191).

"Worms with little poison and worms with not a little poison, and worms with fluid venom, are of two kinds, burning in effect. There remain herbs unseen and concealed." (1)

"The unseen worm kills those who are not seen and it goes back and kills those that are not seen. Then it hits off and kills. Then it crushes by squeezing." (2)

"There are the herbs like the *Shara* grass and the *Kushara* grass, there are the herbs like the *Darbha* grass and the *Surya* grass. There are the herbs called the *Munja*. They are the unseen enemies of the poison. They all remain joined together." (3)

"The cows remain hidden in the stall; the animals remain hidden in the jungles. There is the knowledge remaining hidden in Man. In the same way the remedies remain hidden." (4)

"Whatever may have poison on the shoulders, whatever may have poison in their limbs, whatever have needle-like points with poison, whatever may have strong poison, whatever may remain unseen and hidden from your view, may all of them disappear together." (7)

I have given some specimen passages from that song. The language is very obscure and the meaning is even more obscure. The commentaries and the modern translations have been of little avail in making the meaning clear. I have tried to present some consistent ideas here. We do not know whether they actually uttered such passages and were able to cure the effects of the poison. The power of sound and of the mind is still mysterious to us, and many regard them as superstitions. But if at any stage in the development of science, it is established that mind and sound are finer stages in the evolution of matter from the Absolute stage to the gross stages, then such forms of matter may be used as tools for breaking matter in finer stages than what has been ascertained in modern science.

Someone named Subandhu had fallen into a state of swoon and three others by name Bandhu, Shrutabandhu and Viprabandhu are trying to recall the mind that had departed from the body. This is the theme in a song (X-58).

"That mind of yours which has gone far off to Yama, son of Vivasvat, we are trying to bring back so that you may live in this home." (1)

The remaining eleven verses are practically the same, the only change being in the place where the mind has gone. The places are: the heaven, the earth (2), the earth which has four corners (3), the four cardinal points (4), the ocean filled with water (5), the shining regions above (6), the waters and the herbs (7), the Sun and the Dawn (8), the high mountains (9), this entire world (10), the farthest of the far off regions (11), and what is dead and gone and what will come in future (12). It is doubtful whether the man had actually died. It is only the mind that had departed and not the life. But in the very first verse it is said that the mind had gone to Yama. This can be only a surmise along with various other places where the mind might be wandering.

There is a song assigned to Indrani, the consort of Indra, and in this Indrani is trying to bring ruin to her co-wife (*Sapatni*). The song is X-145.

"I dig out this herb, the creeper, the most powerful, by which one shall be able to attack the co-wife, by which one shall be able to obtain the husband all to oneself." (1)

"O, you creeper with leaves spreading out upwards, beautiful to look at, inspired by the gods in your growth, full of strength, smash down my co-wife, make the husband solely for me." (2)

"You are exalted, make me also exalted, make me exalted above all exalted ones. Then she who is my co-wife, make her degraded below the most degraded." (3)

"I do not want to utter her name. None has a delight in that person. I drive out the co-wife to the farthest among the far off places." (4)

"I have been able to spurn down my co-wife and you are one who has done this work of spurning her down. Both of us become able to spurn her down and let us spurn her down." (5)

There are songs relating to evil dreams and to fatal diseases like consumption. There are songs for exorcising the demons. It is not possible to give an exhaustive presentation of the various patterns of songs and the various kinds of subject matter contained in the *Rigveda*. They are so varied. I have tried to give some important specimens of some chief types. There is one more type which cannot be ignored and that relates to the rewards which Sages received from kings and from wealthy people in recognition of their attainments regarding their powers of vision and their powers for composing poetry. Prastoka is the son of Srinjaya and he gave gifts to Garga, son of Bharadvaja, and he praises Srinjaya and he gave gifts to Garga, son of Bharadvaja, and he praises his liberality in a few of the verses in the song VI-47.

"Prastoka gave away ten treasures and ten horses out of what he had obtained through you (Indra). We accepted from Divodasa that wealth which is in the form of the riches taken away from Shambara and which belonged to Atithigva." (22)

This is a rather strange way of putting it. According

to tradition, Prastoka, Divodasa and Atithigva are the names of the same person. But the name Divodasa is put in the ablative case and the name of Atithigva is put in the genitive case. The riches belonged to the enemy named Shambara and with the help of Indra, Divodasa, also known as Atithigva, obtained those riches, and that wealth was given by him, also known as Prastoka, to Garga. Garga accepted that wealth. This is the meaning.

"I obtained from Divodasa ten horses, ten treasures, ten clothes over and above rich food, and also ten lumps of gold." (23)

"Ashvatha gave away to the Atharvans and to Payu ten chariots, along with spare horses and a hundred cows." (24)

Ashvatha is also given as another name of Divodasa. Payu is one of the Sages in the *Rigveda* whose songs are included in the collection, and who too belongs to the Bharadvaja family to which Garga belonged.

"The son of Srinjaya honoured the members of the Bharadvaja family who had accepted such immense riches which all people would covet." (25).

Divodasa is the son of Srinjaya. He gave riches as presents to Garga and to the other members of the Bharadvaja family and showed them great honour when they accepted his gifts.

If it is said that the sages were greedy priests who are prepared to bend their knees before any wealthy person who would give them riches and that the rich kings were very vain and were elated at flattery and would part with any wealth if they were flattered; this is a caricature of the actual position. It is a fit reward for worthy accomplishments, given by honoured persons to fit persons. There are about twenty such songs and out of them only about six are outside the eighth Book of the *Rigveda;* all the rest, about fourteen, are in the eighth Book. There is only one full song about the gifts received by a poet from a king and that is the gift received by Kakshivan from the king Bhavayavya (I-125). In all the others, only a few verses are devoted to such a praise of gifts. This is the mode of honouring those who patronised learning and culture at that time; they composed songs.

XIX. Harmony

We know nothing about the ethnic unity of the people who started Indian civilization and who composed the literature known as the Vedas. They all had a common language, and from that we surmise that ethnically also they were the same unit of people. They had their neighbours on the western side who too spoke a language not much different from their own. We can therefore conclude that ethnically also, the two peoples were the same at some time. But they had separated into two nations. Among the people who developed Indian civilization, there was no political unity. They were divided into a large number of States each with a king at its head. There must have been conflicts among the kings. But their feuds never endangered the national unity of the entire people.

There were many teachers who guided the people in their religious beliefs and practices. There was a common mode of religious worship. But there were many gods. No god was confined to any particular group within the people. The gods were the objects of worship for the whole nation and by all the teachers. The division did not divide the people. Nor did the avocations divide the people and it has been found that people following different trades lived together in the same family. The teachers were not teachers who advocated the worship of this god or that god or according to this mode or that mode. They were people with a vision and intuition, who could see deeper into the facts of the world, and they were never opposed to any question on account of differences of an external nature in the objects of the world, which they saw in their reality; in reality they saw only unity in the world. On account of unifying force, their differences in the political life as citizens of different States did not divide them into rival groups fighting with one another. The existence of many gods and teachers also did not form a

ground for differences and conflicts.

In each of the gods they saw the Ultimate Godhead, and this belief in the Ultimate Godhead being manifested in the many gods also was a strong force towards unification. This did not result in the acceptance of the individual gods being the manifestations of different Ultimate Godheads. The presence of the people with transcendental vision and deep intuition prevented such a disruption among the people.

There is frequent mention of intellectual power (*Kratu*) and political power (*Kshatra*), and there is also the mention of the common people who followed their normal avocations and maintained the economic prosperity of the country. There was no mutual conflict among the three interests. They had their separate functions in the national life. They speak frequently about the "Five Peoples," in the *Rigveda* and there are many prayers to the gods to help the "Five Peoples" and to help them with protection against their common enemies. The "Five Peoples" are the five divisions of civic life, namely, the intellectual, the martial, the economic and the labour, along with the wild tribes. They are not, as has been made out in recent times, five tribes who were at war with one another. I have shown this in many of my writings. There are passages where the fourfold division of civic life is indicated, and the following is in an address to the Dawn:

"The Dawn views the various kinds of beings so that the many may attain imperial sway and glory, for the acquisition and attainment of the means. You spread in the whole world." (I-113-6)

Here glory is the glory of wisdom. Acquisition and attainment of objects are the securing of the means and the enjoyment of the means. They represent wealth and labour to produce the wealth. The ancient commentators do not interpret the passage in this way; they give a ritualistic colour to it. In the interpretations of modern scholars also, the meaning that I have given is not included. But I am satisfied that certain goals in life are alluded to here, and goals mean functions also.

There is another place where three goals, wisdom, power and wealth, are mentioned in a clearer way. These

passages are addressed to the Twin-gods named the Ashvins.

"Take delight in our songs, in our thoughts; kill evil spirits. Ward off sufferings. Take delight in imperial sway, in heroic people; take delight in the cows and in the ordinary people." (VIII-35-16 to 18)

In the three passages there is only one line. The other three lines are common to all the three verses. As a matter of fact, in the whole song, the second half is a refrain passage, and I have not given it here. Here, intellect, martial valour and wealth are definitely mentioned.

There is only one place in the *Rigveda* where the four castes of later days are mentioned; this is with reference to the Universal Spirit (*Purusha*):

"His face became the Brahmins, his hands were made into the Kshatriyas. The two thighs were the Vaishyas. From the feet were born the Shudras." (X-90-12)

The four castes did not form divisions of citizens at that time; they were only divisions of civic functions. The first three divisions are clear even among the Iranians, as is found in the *Avesta*. There is no inferiority or degradation attached to any of the divisions. People following different divisions lived in the same family, and some of them came under what is called "Labour". The following song is very interesting. (IX-112)

"Various are our thoughts. The activities of men are also different. A carpenter loves to split the timber and the physician wants diseases. A poet loves those who worship the gods, with *Soma* oblations." (1)

"An artisan loves one with money, making weapons with old twigs, with the feathers of birds, with whetstones, with rocks." (2)

"I am a poet. My father was a physician. My mother was engaged in husking grain in mortar. We were different in our thoughts; we all wanted wealth. We all follow our trade as we follow a cow." (3)

Here it is definitely stated that people follow different trades with a common aim, that of earning wealth. They may be different in nature; but there is no conflict or superiority complex among them. All work in harmony and with mutual respect.

The division of the people into separate States may create disruption. Different gods and different teachers may bring about a break in the people's national unity. Different professions also tend to produce splits in the people. But in the Vedic times there was no such tendency. Poets and artisans worked together and lived in the same family. This Vedic ideal of harmony in the nation is clearly adored in a song which closes the *Rigveda* (X-191).

"O Fire-god, O strong one, O noble one, you bring everything together. You shine brilliantly in the Altar. May you bring riches to us." (1)

Gods may be many. But they are all worshipped through the same medium and that is the Fire. It is this Fire that brings all different things together into a unity and that brings riches to the people. They always emphasise the common factor and bring the different things together through this common factor. Then there is this address to the people who had assembled in that congregation:

"Come together. Speak in unison. May your hearts feel in harmony, just as the ancient gods accept the oblations offered to them, knowing them, with harmony." (2)

The different objects are offered as oblations to the gods who had been among them from ancient times and they all know the different objects as forming a unity and they all accept their share without any mutual discord.

"The secret consultations are the same. The assembly where they prepare the plans is also common. Their minds are in harmony and their thoughts are also in harmony. So I address this common secret advice to all of you. I offer this common oblation to you all." (3)

"May your aspirations be common. May your hearts be in harmony. May your thoughts be in harmony. And in this way may you all remain together in concord." (4)

There is no room for any doubt that the people had a sense of national unity. This national unity was not produced by the tight political machinery which prejudices the individual freedom of the citizens. The individuals loved freedom and the nation also loved freedom; they respected the freedom of other peoples while they maintained their own. It was not a unity maintained with the

help of an army. The unity arose from within the individual. This is what the poets and the leaders of culture accomplished. Military power can keep up a unity among individuals only as an external force and not from within, and when such an external force vanishes, the unity too disintegrates; but when the unity is worked up from within, that lasts as long as the individuals continue to exist.

The poets create a sense of unity on the time axis also, and that unity was worked up on the spatial plane too. Thus the country became unified through the unification of the past and the present, and this ensured the unity of the present and the future too. This unity in time helped the continuity of the unity on the spatial side. The people were aware of the achievements of the past and they were proud of them. This pride was one of the strongest forces that kept the individuals together as a united nation. From the beginning to the end of the *Rigveda*, we note this pride of the ancients and of their achievements. "We follow what our ancients had done". This was their motto. One poet recommends that they "should consider the Path followed by the ancients" (X-130-7). It is this advice which the leaders of the nation in later times also followed, and the essence of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* and the works of poets like Kalidasa is that they were proud of the achievements of their ancestors and wanted to present them to the nation in the form of poetry. It is this which prevented a break-up of the nation and which enabled the nation to resist the attacks of the Greeks and of the Huns, when other great empires, built on the foundations of the military power of the conquerors, were shaken before the invasion of the same peoples.

When philosophers of the later periods declared that their systems of thought were based on the Vedas, what is meant is not that they simply presented the contents of the Vedas without any question, without applying their critical faculty. What this meant is that there is a continuity in the thought currents reaching back to the Vedic times. Such currents, like the curents of a river, received the flow from other currents as tributaries and they expanded

and even slightly changed their form on account of such additions. But there was never a break in the current. Absorption, assimilation and growth had been the process which they accepted as guiding principles. That trait is found in the Vedas themselves. This adjustment of originality with tradition is a special feature in the Indian genius, started from the Vedic period. It is this that was nurtured by the poets and other true leaders of the nation and which enabled the people to continue as a united nation in spite of various kinds of differences. My own view is that this particular song about national unity was placed at the end of the *Rigvedic* collection deliberately and with a specific purpose.

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